

An analysis of the intercalation of Mark 11:12-25 in light of narrative criticism and the oral aspect of Mark



**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theology (New Testament) at the University of Stellenbosch**

Study leader: Dr M.J.Nel

"

""""""""""Cr tki'4236"

Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Signature:

Date: 25 Feb. 2014.

Copyright © 2016 Stellenbosch University

All rights reserved

Abstract

Mark 11:12-25 has been identified as an intercalation or sandwich structure (A-B-A) by many scholars as consisting of three linked episodes: the cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14), the cleaning of the temple (11:15-19), and the withered fig tree (11:20-25). Using the function of intercalation, Mark 11:12-25 is then interpreted symbolically as a prophecy of the destruction of the temple. This interpretation, however, the researcher argues, is implausible. To substantiate this claim, the research aims to interpret Mark 11:12-25 in the light of narrative criticism and the oral aspect of Mark.

Chapter 2 lays the basic foundation for the current research. This includes a brief history of the study of Mark, the historical interpretation of Mark 11:12-25, a comparison between Matthew and Mark, and of studies concerned with intercalation. Various differing opinions of intercalation are given that complicate our understanding of its function.

The main goal of chapter 3 is to examine Mark 11:12-25 according to three narrative elements, namely setting, characters and events. On the grounds that every scene in Mark 11 is connected naturally in the time and space setting, it will be argued that Mark did not arrange the two stories in Mark 11:12-25 as intercalation with a theological purpose. Although some argue that the two stories do not fit the character of Jesus, on the contrary, it will be argued that both stories strengthens the authority and power of Jesus as it is depicted in the Gospel of Mark. If Jesus teaching is considered (11:20-25), then the symbolic interpretation of the prophecy of the destruction of the temple cannot be sustained.

Chapter 4 deals with the oral aspect of Mark. Mark's community were in all likelihood not readers, but hearers. Dewey offers some characteristics of oral narratives, particularly their additive and aggregative structures and their participatory character. These, she argues, helps the reader to interpret the various aspects of Mark that have divided both scholars and literary critics of the Gospel. Therefore, the fig tree story and the temple

story will be examined in the light of the oral aspect of Mark.

The final chapter will offer a summary of each chapter and a synthesized conclusion.

Opsomming

Om Markus 11:12-25 korrek te interpreteer is vir 'n lang tyd reeds 'n debatteerbare saak. Die gedeelte word dikwels as 'n invoeging (A-B-A) geïdentifiseer wat uit drie verweefde episodes bestaan: die vloek van die vyeboom (11:12-14), die skoonmaak van die tempel (11:15-19), en die verdorde vyeboom (11:20-25). Deur klem te lê op die funksie van die invoeging, interpreteer baie geleerdes Markus 11:12-25 as 'n simboliese voorspelling van die vernietiging van die tempel. Hierdie interpretasie, argumenteer die navorser egter, is onhoudbaar. Om die stelling te staaf, poog die navorsing om Markus 11:12-25 in die lig van vertellingskritiek en die mondelinge aspek van Markus te lees.

Hoofstuk 2 lê die basiese fondasie van die skripsie. Dit sluit 'n kort geskiedenis in van die studie van Markus, die historiese interpretasie van Markus 11:12-25, 'n vergelyking tussen Matteus en Markus, en 'n opsomming van studies gemoeid met invoegings. Die verskillende menings oor die funksie van invoegings, wat die verstaan van Markus 11:12-25 bemoeilik sal ook bespreek word.

Die hoofdoel van hoofstuk 3 is om Markus 11:12-25 te ondersoek volgens drie narratiewe elemente, naamlik die setting, die karakter en die gebeure daarin vervat. Op grond daarvan dat elke toneel in Markus 11 verbind is ten opsigte van tyd en ruimte word aangevoer word dat Markus nie die twee stories in Markus 11:12-25 as invoeging met 'n teologiese doel georden het nie. Alhoewel sommige argumenteer dat die twee stories nie by die karakter van Jesus pas nie, sal dit in teendeel aangevoer word naamlik dat beide stories die gesag en mag van Jesus, soos dit uitgebeeld word in die evangelie van Markus, versterk.

Hoofstuk 4 handel oor die mondelinge dimensie van Markus. Markus se gemeenskap was in alle waarskynlikheid nie lesers nie, maar hoorders. In die verband bied Dewey 'n paar eienskappe van mondelinge vertelling aan, veral die toevoeging en kumulatiewe strukture en deelnemende karakter daarvan. Hierdie, betoog sy, help die leser om die verskillende aspekte van Markus wat kritici van die Evangelie verdeel, te interpreteer.

Die laaste hoofstuk bestaan uit 'n opsomming van elke hoofstuk en 'n gesintetiseerde gevolgtrekking.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All glory belongs to God!

I could not do anything without the grace of God. It was He who gave me the chance to study at Stellenbosch University. From the beginning of my studies at the university, right to the end, I must confess, God guided and strengthened me to complete this academic program.

I would like to express my appreciation to my promoter, Dr Marius Nel, who encouraged me warmly, and offered lots of insightful remarks during my research.

Special thanks go to Rev Youn-ho Lee and the Young-bok Presbyterian Church members for their spiritual and financial support.

Appreciation also goes out to my friends in South Africa, including the Mountain View Fellowship Group and Music Ministry members in Christ.

I similarly give thanks to my parents and parents-in-law, who constantly supported, prayed and provided for my family's physical needs.

Finally, but importantly, I thank my wife, Ji-Young Park and my daughters, Ye-won and Chae-won. Their love and support truly brought happiness to my heart during our stay in South Africa, even though my studies kept me away from them for so many hours at a time.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Opsomming	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
Chapter 1.....	1
1.1. Problem statement and Prior study.....	1
1.2. Aim.....	3
1.3. Research question.....	4
1.4. Research design and methods of the proposed study	4
Chapter 2.....	6
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 A brief history of the study of the Gospel of Mark	6
2.3 A brief history of the interpretation of Mark 11:12-25.....	10
2.3.1 The interpretation of Mark 11:12-25 before the work of Telford.....	10
2.3.2 The interpretation of Mark 11:12-25 after the work of Telford.....	13
2.4 Matthew and Mark	17
2.5 Intercalation.....	21
2.6 Conclusion.....	28
Chapter 3.....	30
3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 Narrative analysis as method.....	30
3.3 A narrative analysis of Mark 11:12-25	36
3.3.1 Setting.....	36
3.3.1.1The setting of Mark 11:11-25	37
3.3.1.1.1 Spatial Setting.....	37
3.3.1.1.2 Temporal Settings	39

3.3.2 Characters	42
3.3.2.1 The characters in Mark 11:12-25	43
3.3.2.1.1 Jesus.....	43
3.3.2.1.2 Disciples	45
3.3.2.1.3 The authorities	46
3.3.3 Events	47
3.3.3.1 Events of Mark 11:12-25	47
3.4 Conclusion.....	49
Chapter 4.....	51
4.1 Introduction	51
4.2 Oral criticism as method	51
4.3 For the Hearer, not the Reader	55
4.4 Mark's oral legacy	58
4.5 Memory and intercalation	60
4.6 The implication of orality study from Dewey	63
4.6.1 Additive and aggregative composition.....	64
4.6.2 Agonistic tone	65
4.6.3 Participatory character.....	66
4.7 Oral characteristics in Mark 11:12-25	67
4.7.1 Additive and aggregative	68
4.7.2 Agonistic tone	69
4.7.3 Participatory character.....	71
4.7 Conclusion.....	73
Chapter 5.....	76
5.1 Introduction	76
5.2 Overview	77
5.3 Conclusion.....	83
Bibliography	85

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Problem statement and Prior study

Mark 11:12-25, which will form the focus of this thesis, is one of the most difficult Markan pericopes to interpret. Recently, Kirk (2012:511) stated that “from a redaction-critical perspective, a majority of Markan scholars now agree that the symbolic intent of depicting the temple’s destruction is established by the intercalation¹ of the temple-clearing incident with the cursing of the fig tree.” In this regard, it seems that Telford’s book, *The Barren Temple And The Withered Tree*, has influenced many commentators to agree with him that “for the Markan reader the cursing of the fig-tree was an eschatological sign prefiguring the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple” (Telford 1980:163).

The works of Shepherd (1991), Donahue (1973) and Edwards (1989) are representative of scholars who understand Mark 11:12-25 as an intercalation. According to Shepherd (1991:689), Mark 11:12-25 is one of the six most commonly identified intercalations in the gospel of Mark. Shepherd (1991:688) states that the Markan intercalation “is a literary technique in which one story is begun only to be interrupted by a second story. After the conclusion of the second story the first story is rejoined and completed.” Donahue (1973:60) argues that “Mark uses the technique of intercalation not simply as a literary device to create the allusion (sic) of passing time, but in terms of a theological interest in relating the disciples to the work and fate of Jesus.” Edwards (1989:216) prefers the image of a sandwich and considers “the purpose of Markan sandwiches as theological and not solely literary.” Therefore, Edwards (1989:208) concludes that: “A-episodes admittedly

¹ According to Edwards (1989:193), intercalation is “breaking up a story or pericope by inserting a second, seemingly unrelated, story into the middle of it.”

also interpret the B-episode, for the cursing and withering of the fig tree do, in fact, foreshadow the destruction of the temple.”

There are, however, also a number of scholars (e.g. Gundry and Collins) who do not regard Mark 11:12-25 as an intercalation. In his commentary, Gundry (1993:672) explicitly rejects a symbolic interpretation thereof and argues that Mark “could not and probably would not count on the mere juxtaposition of fig tree and temple to create a metaphorical association between the two.”

Collins (2007:523-525) also questions a symbolic interpretation of Mark 11:12-25. She suggests that “recent studies of orality have placed the whole question of intercalation in a new light” (2007:524). In this regard, she cites Paul J. Achtemeier (1990:21) who states that “[the] Markan technique of intercalating stories is a way of allowing one story to function as an *inclusio* for a second, thus aiding the listener in determining when both stories have concluded.” Collins (2007:524) argues that “since Mark was written to be read aloud by a single reader to a gathered group, the purpose of aiding the listener is likely to be the intention of the author.” In this regard, the intercalation in Mark 11:12-25 may serve as an simple aid for the listener in an oral culture hearing Mark being read, rather than as a literary technique with a theological aim (i.e. functioning as prophecy of the destruction of the temple).

Although a symbolic interpretation of Mark 11:12-25 as a prophesy of the destruction of the temple has persuasive power that is emphasised by the sandwich-narrative in which it is embedded in the Gospel, Collins (2007:524-525) concludes that modern literary critics should, however, be cautious of exaggerating the degree to which the intercalated stories are intended to interpret one another.

With regard to the symbolic interpretation of the withered fig tree as referring to the destruction of the temple, it seems as if the *literary* presupposition that the intercalated stories are intended to interpret one another is crucial for this interpretation of Mark 11:12-25. If Collins is correct, the question arises whether a number of scholars are incorrectly interpreting Mark 11:12-25 as a reference to the destruction of the temple? If

recent studies of orality undermine a symbolic interpretation of Mark 11:12-25, what would then be its correct meaning? Therefore, to understand the function of intercalations in Mark, one must not only examine its function in the Markan narrative through a *literary* analysis, but also its function as a technique used in oral cultures through oral criticism.

1.1. Aim

The aim of this research is to interpret Mark 11:12-25 appropriately. Although Kirk (2012:511) asserts that “a majority of Markan scholars now agree that the symbolic intent of depicting the temple’s destruction is established by the intercalation”, this study will examine whether Kirk’s statement is correct or not, i.e., whether Mark 11:12-25 can be interpreted as a prophecy of the destruction of the temple.

To accomplish this aim a proper understanding of the function of intercalations in texts written in an oral culture first has to be established. Given that many scholars interpret Mark 11:12-25 as an intercalation and that a symbolic interpretation thereof largely depends on the mutual interpretation of inner and outer stories of the postulated intercalation, it is important to examine the *definition* and *function* of Markan intercalations in general and in Mark 11:12-25 in particular.

Moreover, an interpreter must not only focus on a literary analysis of the Gospel of Mark, but also heed Collins’ caution regarding the function of intercalation in terms of recent orality studies. Mark 11:12-25 will therefore be studied by paying attention both to narrative criticism (chapter 3) and orality criticism² (chapter 4).

² According to Rhoads (2010:21), “orality criticism has been one of the most exciting developments in biblical studies. Orality critics seek to understand from oral cultures, ancient and modern, the ethos of orality, the relation of writing to culture, the responsibilities and practices of tradents, the dynamics of social memory, the power dimensions of oral communication, and the gender dimensions of orality.”

1.2. Research question

In the light of the aforementioned considerations, the following research question will be investigated in this study: Does Mark 11:12-25 constitute an intercalation with a specific theological purpose (the prediction of the destruction of the temple) or is the purpose of the structure of the pericope purely to aid the listener? The answer to this question will confirm the plausibility of a symbolic interpretation of the cursing of the fig tree as a prophecy describing the destruction of the temple.

1.3. Research design and methods of the proposed study

In order to examine the definition and function of the Markan intercalations in general and Mark 11:12-25 in particular, a literature study of recent research in this regard (e.g. the work of Edwards, Shepherd, and Wright) will be undertaken.

According to Horsley (2006:vii), some scholars began to read the Gospels as sustained narratives in the 1970s. This recognition of the narrative nature of the Gospel necessitated an appropriate method in order to study them and it was with this intention that Narrative criticism was developed. It is this method that will therefore be used to analyse the Gospel of Mark as a narrative.³ In his book, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, Powell argues that “the goal of narrative criticism is to read the text as the implied reader ... to read in this way, it is necessary to know everything that the text assumes the reader knows and to ‘forget’ everything that the text does not assume the reader knows.” In his doctoral thesis, Shepherd (1991) analyses six passages commonly accepted as intercalations with respect to the common categories of narrative analysis (i.e. setting, characters, actions and plot, time, narrator and implied reader, and stylistic features). However, in this study, Mark 11:12-25 will be analysed by using the categories of settings, character, and events.

³ See chapter 3 in which the methodology of Narrative criticism is explained further.

In addition, Dewey (1991:235) argues that although the Gospel of Mark was not composed orally, “it was still very close to oral composition, and that it was certainly composed with the needs of a listening audience in mind.” Therefore, Dewey (1991:235) claims that “we need to pay more attention to oral hermeneutics in studying the Gospel.” In an earlier article, titled *Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark*, Dewey (1989:33) also argued “that the Gospel of Mark as a whole shows the legacy of orality, indeed that its methods of composition are primarily oral ones.” Following Dewey, Mark 11:12-25 will thus also be analysed in terms of the oral aspect of Mark (i.e. its additive and aggregative structures, the agonistic tone, and the participatory character). Dewey (1994:149) claims that these characteristics help “us to interpret various aspects of Mark that have puzzled and divided scholars and literary critics of the Gospel.”

Chapter 2

The history of the interpretation of Mark 11:12-25 as an intercalation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will lay the foundation for the study of Mark 11:12-25 as a possible intercalation. It will include a brief history of previous studies of the Gospel of Mark, an overview of the history of the interpretation of Mark 11:12-25, a comparison of the difference between the versions of the episodes as found in Matthew and Mark, and of a number of scholars' understanding of intercalation in general.

2.2 A brief history of the study of the Gospel of Mark

The traditional understanding of the Gospel of Mark was largely based on the view of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor. In regard to the Gospel of Mark, Papias wrote:

This is what the Elder used to say: Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately, though not in order (τάξει), all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not himself heard the Lord or been his follower, but later, as I said, he followed Peter. Peter delivered teachings as occasion required, rather, than compiling a sort of orderly presentation (σύνταξιν) of the traditions about the Lord. So Mark was not wrong in recording in this way the individual items as he remembered them. His one concern was to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in reporting them (France 2002:7-8).

Papias' reference to Mark has led some to have a high estimation of the second Gospel⁴. Barclay (2001:5) for instance, states that “we may put it this way: Mark is the nearest approach we will ever possess to an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus.” This high valuation of Mark has not always been the case, however, as it was neglected by biblical scholars for a long time. In the words of Chapman (1993:13), “the earliest Gospel has been treated like an orphan practically from the day it was written.” According to Martin (1979:30), “no commentary on this Gospel was written before that of Victor of Antioch (in the 5th century) who complained that he could not find any treatment of this gospel comparable with expositions of Matthew and John.”⁵ This reason seems to be that Mark was simply regarded as a shortened version of Matthew. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, thought that “Matthew is the earliest Gospel; Mark is an abridgment of Matthew; and the later Gospels depend upon these earlier ones” (McKnight 1969:6). Up to the nineteenth century, the view of Augustine was the “orthodox” position.

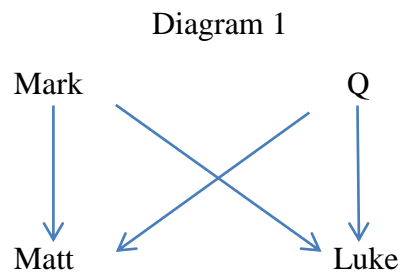
In the nineteenth century the estimation of the value of the Gospel of Mark changed dramatically. According to Hooker (1983:1), “for centuries, Mark was the Cinderella among the Synoptic.” Scholars began to realize that Mark was the earliest of the four Gospels. According to Clive Marsh and Steve Moyise (1999:14), “scholars such as Lachmann (1835) and Holtzmann (1863) showed that the ‘abbreviation’ theory is untenable. For example, the story of the demoniac and the pigs (Matt 8:28-34) occupies seven verses in Matthew, but Mark’s account runs to twenty verses (Mark 5:1-20).” Hooker (1983:1-2) states that “the belief that Mark was the earliest of the Gospels meant that scholars treated it with a new respect; for if this Gospel was the earliest Gospel, then it was the closest to the events which it described, and must surely be the most reliable.”

⁴ According to France (2002:8), “if Papias’s information is correct, Peter, even if not ‘systematic’ enough for some tastes, must have been a lively preacher. The vivid narrative style and content of the Marcan stories may well derive as much from the way Peter used to tell them as from Mark’s own skill as a raconteur.” There is, however, no way of proving this.

⁵ According to Donahue and Harrington (2002:4), “Michael Cahill has argued that the earliest commentary (which was thought to be from Jerome) is most likely by an unknown seventh-century Irish monk. Cahill contends that work predates that of Venerable Bede (673-735 C.E.), who was thought to be the author of the first independent commentary on Mark.”

According to Donahue and Harrington (2002:4), “most New Testament scholars favor the priority of Mark on the basis of certain ways in which Matthew and Luke are related to Mark.”

According to Brown (1997:111), “Mark has 661 verses; Matt has 1,068, and Luke has 1,149. Eighty percent of Mark’s vv. are reproduced in Matt and 65 percent in Luke.” Offering some explanation for these statistics, Brown (1997:115) concludes that “the basic argument for Marcan priority is that it solves more problems than any other theory. It offers the best explanation for why Matt and Luke so often agree with Mark in order and wording, and allows reasonable surmises for why Matt and Luke differ from Mark when they do so independently” (cf. Diagram 1).



Donahue and Harrington (2002:4) state that “basically the Two-Source hypothesis argues that Matthew and Luke used as written sources the Gospel of Mark and another source called Q (from the German Quelle meaning ‘source’). This latter source consists of roughly 335 verses, mostly sayings of Jesus, that Matthew and Luke share in common but that are not found in Mark.” Collins (2007:95) also states that “although the two-source theory cannot explain all the similarities and differences among the Synoptic Gospels, it is widely accepted today because it provides a more adequate explanation of more of the data than any other hypothesis.” However, concerning our passages, especially in relation to intercalation, there are scholars who doubt the Two-Source hypothesis, as will be reviewed in what follows.

Guelich (1989:xxxviii) states that “since the work of W. Wrede, Mark has been seen as

having a distinctive theological message rather than simply being an account of the historical Jesus' ministry." According to Watson (2010:3), "Wrede identifies a division between the historical and theological facets of the Gospels, especially with regard to the Gospel of Mark. He holds that 'the Gospel of Mark belongs to the history of dogma,' and consequently the presentation of Jesus in this Gospel is governed primarily by dogmatic concerns." In 1901, Wrede proposed the messianic secret that "although Jesus is the Messiah, he hides this and tells his disciples not to reveal his miraculous healings to others, with the result that only demons recognize his identity" (Brown 1997:153). According to Brown (1997:153), Wrede regarded this picture as historically implausible, as "the Messianic Secret had been invented to facilitate bringing early traditions that were nonmessianic into a proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah."⁶

However, in the introduction of his commentary, Gundry (1993:1) argues the Gospel of Mark does not contain ciphers, hidden meaning, and sleight of hand. Instead, he (1993:1) argues that "Mark's meaning lies on the surface." In relating to Gundry's statements, Brown (1997:156) remarks that "since we do not know whether or not any of these factors existed, it is better to read Mark without them."

Finally, but importantly, the date of the composition of Mark must be mentioned. According to Dewey (2011:1841), there is "... agreement among scholars as to the dating of Mark – sometime between the mid-sixties and the early seventies CE and in some connection to the Roman-Jewish War of 66-70 CE." The major difference of opinion, however, concerns whether the Gospel of Mark was composed before or after the destruction of the temple, which occurred in 70 CE (Collins 2007:11). As far as the current study is related to the destruction of the temple, the date of Mark's composition is important. However, given that the internal evidence in Mark is not extensive enough to determine any exact connection⁷ (Dewey 2011:1842), it is difficult to determine the date

⁶ According to Donahue and Harrington (2002:28-29): "Ultimately the term 'messianic secret' is a misnomer. It arises from Mark 4:11: 'to you has been given *to mystērion* of the kingdom of God.' Some translations render *mystērion* as 'secret.' But 'mystery' is a term with apocalyptic overtones connoting the disclosure by God of a truth hidden until a certain decisive point in the divine plan is reached (see Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 15:51; Col 1:26)."

⁷ According to Collins (2007:11), "the best evidence for the date of Mark is provided by the eschatological

of Mark. This study, therefore, will be undertaken without a specific presupposition regarding the date Mark was written.

2.3 A brief history of the interpretation of Mark 11:12-25

Although there are many scholars who have worked on Mark 11:12-25, the work of Telford has been very influential in its interpretation as an intercalation. After Telford published his dissertation, numerous scholars followed his interpretation. Numerous scholars still quote and comment on his study, e.g. Marcus (2009:789) marks Telford's thesis as "an enlightening monograph"; Yong-Eui Yang (2004:79) estimates that "Telford had made remarkable progress in our understanding of the story"; and France (2002:436) borrows his title "from the important study by W. R. Telford." It is therefore important to take note of the research on this passage up to the work of Telford and that which has been undertaken subsequent to it.

2.3.1 The interpretation of Mark 11:12-25 before the work of Telford

Telford's book, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree*, includes a history of the interpretation of Mark 11:12-25. According to Telford (1980:2), "emendations to the text were made and different nuances for the words were suggested" in order to give it a coherent meaning. In his first chapter's notes, Telford offers examples of different emendations that had been offered by various scholars in the past:

‘For it was *not yet* (οὐ= οὐπω) the time for the gathering of the fruit’ (Kuinoel, Deyling, Dahme, Wetstein, Baumgarten Crusius); ‘for *where* (οὗ rather than οὐ) he was, it was the season of figs’ (Heinsius, Knatchbull, Gataker); the interrogative view, ‘for was it not the time of figs?’ (Majus); ‘for it was not a

discourse of Jesus in chap. 13.”

good year (καῖρός = καὶρὸς εὖφορος) for figs' (Hammond, Clericus, Homberg, Paulus, Lange, D'Outrein); 'for it was not a *place suitable for figs*' (Abresch, Triller); for it was not *favourable* weather for figs' (καῖρός = *tempus opportunum*) for figs' (Olshausen, Bornemann).

Another attempt to clarify the meaning of Mark 11:12-25, was the 'gloss' theory, which was very popular for a while. According to Telford (1980:3), "a popular explanation for the gloss has been, in turn, the suggestion that the pericope has been chronologically misplaced. Originally associated with a different period of the year (e. g. Tabernacles), the pericope came to be connected with the Passover season."

The 'winter figs' theory or the 'green knops' theory has also been advanced by numerous scholars. Telford (1980:2) states that "evidence was adduced to show that some form of edible figs could be found at this time of year." From this perspective, Jesus would not have hoped to find the first ripe figs at the Passover season, but could have expected to find figs from the previous year (the winter figs theory). Alternatively, although Jesus could only have hoped for full ripe figs at the Passover season, he could have hoped for green half-ripe knops (the green knops theory) at the time.

Telford also attempts to answer the question of why Jesus would have expected to find figs on the tree during Passover. Quoting Merx, Telford (1980:4) states:

What had drawn Jesus to the tree was the abnormal foliage. Since fruit precedes leaves on the fig-tree, they maintained, the tree offered promise of precocious figs. Since it had none, it proved to be pretentious, and for such hypocrisy, and not for its lack of fruit per se, the tree was cursed.

There have also been some scholars who interpreted the action of Jesus as a 'symbolic act' or as an 'acted parable'. Telford (1980:5) writes in this regard that:

the incident, therefore, has to be seen in a symbolic light, Jesus' action against the 'braggart' fig-tree (so Plummer) being an object lesson directed against

religious hypocrisy in general or against the Jewish people... or as the ingredient of an 'acted parable' historically performed by Jesus himself.

There are also scholars who approach Mark 11:12-25 with a Lukan parable theory. This view is that the cursing of the fig tree in Mark came from the parable described in Luke 13:6-9. Quoting Loisy, Telford (1980:13) states that "the Luke parable could easily have been understood in early Christian tradition as an allegory of the fate of Israel, he suggested, and then subsequently connected with Jesus' visit to Jerusalem."

According to Telford (1980:19), Grant argues that "Jesus had indeed expected the imminent coming of the kingdom in the earlier period of his ministry." In this regard, Telford (1980:22-23) states that:

The growing stress on late Jewish and early Christian eschatology has led equally, on the other hand, to the view that 11.13d is genuine, indeed crucial, for these words, it is alleged, are a pointer to the eschatological dimension within which the story was conceived (so, for example, Hiers, Derrett, Bartsch, Mündlerlein).

According to Hiers (1968:394-395), "Norman Perrin classifies it as one of 'the warnings addressed to Israel'. Others consider it as an 'acted out parable' concerning the forthcoming rejection of 'the Jews,' or the importance of bearing ethical or spiritual fruit in preparation for the coming kingdom and Judgment." However, Hiers (1968:395) argues that "Jesus expected to find fruit on the fig tree because he was expecting the messianic age to begin; for in the messianic age, figs – together with all other products of nature – would always be in season."

According to Edwards (2002:339), "the earliest commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Victor of Antioch in the fifth century already understood the event as an enacted parable, in which the cursing of the fig tree symbolized the judgment to befall Jerusalem." In this regard, the prophecy of the destruction of the temple has a long history.

2.3.2 The interpretation of Mark 11:12-25 after the work of Telford

In the second chapter of his study, Telford pays close attention to the sources and redaction of Mark 11. In that section, Telford (1980:49) argues that:

In claiming that Mark's story was intended to have a symbolic function, we are at once confronted with a serious objection. It has been frequently pointed out, with justice, that vv. 22-26 of the sequel do not appear to interpret the fig-tree story in a symbolic or allegorical light.

So, in this regard, Telford (1980:58) argues:

Part of this material is secondary to the Markan text, and has been inserted by later scribes, who may have been puzzled, dissatisfied or embarrassed by the theological import of the passage before them, or who wished to add further comments by affixing additional 'faith' and 'prayer' sayings to it.

Telford dealt with the background of the "fig tree" in the Old Testament in chapter 5 of his book. "Telford particularly highlights five OT passages (Isa 28:3-4; Jer 8:13; Hos 9:10, 16; Joel 1:7, 12; Mic 7:1), all of which, like Mark 11:12-14, 20, use the withering of the fig tree as a symbol for eschatological judgment on Israel, and all of which occur in scriptural contexts that were regularly mined by early Christians" (Marcus 2009:789) (cf. List 1).

List 1

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Is. 28:3-4 | Trampled under foot will be the proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim. And the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of those bloated with rich food, will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer; whoever sees it, eats it up as soon as it comes to hand. |
| Jer. 8:13 | When I wanted to gather them, says the LORD, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what |

I gave them has passed away from them.

- Hos. 9:10 Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your ancestors. But they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to a thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved.
Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit. Even though they give birth, I will kill the cherished offspring of their womb.
- Joel 1:7,12 It has laid waste my vines, and splintered my fig trees; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches have turned white.
The vine withers, the fig tree droops. Pomegranate, palm, and apple—all the trees of the field are dried up; surely, joy withers away among the people.
- Mic. 7:1 Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the vintage has been gleaned, finds no cluster to eat; there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger.

Thus, Telford (1980:163) argues that “for the Markan reader the cursing of the fig-tree was an eschatological sign prefiguring the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.” Telford also dealt with the later Jewish background in chapter 6 and the New Testament in chapter 7. Finally, Telford (1980:238) concludes that “by sandwiching his story on either side of the cleansing account, Mark indicates that he wishes the fate of the unfruitful tree to be seen as a proleptic sign prefiguring the destruction of the Temple cultus.”

Since the work of Telford, various scholars have expanded on his work and it is therefore important to briefly survey their contributions. In terms of the so-called “cleansing of the Temple”, Minor (1996:84) argues that “in Mark’s Gospel it is more appropriately titled the “Cursing of the Temple.” According to Minor (1996:84), “by means of the intercalation, Mark signals that the Temple is destined for the same fate as the fig tree.” Juel (1990 159) also contends that “the familiar image of Jesus ‘cleansing’ the temple is far too weak an appraisal of what is occurring. Jesus’ act is symbolic of something more

serious: it is a sign that the temple will be destroyed.” However, Mann (1986:439) claims that “Mark's concerns in the direction of impending judgment may have included the temple, but it was by no means paramount.” Mann (1986:441) argues that a barren tree is a sign of the fall of Adam in rabbinical and Midrashic material. “After the fall of Adam a righteous person could bring about fruitfulness (cf. Gen 26:12), and for trees to produce abundantly in the New Age ... why the fig tree did not immediately produce fruit, then plainly the New Age was not beginning to dawn” (Mann 1986:441). Mann (1986:452) further argues: “Either Jesus thought that in him the New Age was dawning and that, therefore, the fig tree should already be showing signs of that age, or the fig tree was itself a demonstration that in fact the New Age was not yet ready to be ushered in.”

Hooker (1991:261) also states that “we are clearly meant to see a link between the fate of the barren fig tree and Jesus’ action in the temple.” In other words, “the judgment pronounced on Israel in vv. 12-26 is thus firmly linked with her failure to recognize her Messiah” (1991:261).

Evans (2001:153-154) estimates that “with many interpreters, Stein (“Cleansing,” 121-33) is correct to conclude that Mark (or his predecessor) has deliberately intercalated the fig-tree episode with the cleansing of the temple (11:15-19) in order to have each interpret the other.” While Stein appears to interpret the passages symbolically it according to Evans (2001:158) contains no specific indications of symbolism. He (2001:158) states that

To be sure, trees in general, fig trees in particular, figs, fruit, productivity, and barrenness all serve in the Scriptures as metaphors for individuals, Israel as a nation, nations, their conduct, and their relationship before God. But hunger, fig trees, figs, and barren trees were also a common part of everyday life in Palestine.”

Therefore, Mark 11:22-25, in response to Peter's observation (11:21), show that the story does not have to be taken as an acted parable or a symbolic action and certainly not with reference to Israel (2001:158).

Marcus (2009:782) seems to follow Sanders' understanding of 11:12-25, as he states:

For Sanders, then, Jesus was bent not on ridding the Temple of abuses but on prophesying its destruction, which he accomplished through the sort of parabolic action typical of prophets, stopping sacrificial activity temporarily to point toward its permanent cessation, and overturning the tables of the money changers to symbolize the imminent demise of the sanctuary.

However, Marcus (2009:782) states that differentiating between the destruction or the reformation of the temple is not without its problems. He argues that the distinction between reformation or destruction is a false dichotomy. "For Mark, perhaps, trading in the Temple was an abuse that Jesus tried to correct while already knowing that this attempt would fail. His Temple demonstration, therefore, symbolized both the reform attempt and the judgment of destruction that would follow its failure (2009:782)."

Collins pays attention to the literary relationship between the two stories of the fig tree and the temple. She also refers to scholars who dealt with the relationship of both. According to Collins (2007:523), "Ernst von Dobschütz argued that Mark brought two originally unrelated stories together here and emphasized the way in which v. 11 prepares for vv. 15-19 ... simply allows for time to pass and for the effect of the curse to be noticed on the next day" and "Ernst Lohmeyer concluded that the cursing of the fig tree originally had no symbolic meaning, but that Mark constructed one by its placement" (Collins 2007:523). "Tom Shepherd argued that the two stories create a dramatized irony between the fig tree in the outer story and the temple in the inner story ... Jesus curses the tree but cleanses the temple." Gundry (1993:673), however, argues that "the text of Mark itself fails to support a symbolic interpretation." In chapter 3, the text itself will thus be analyzed through narrative criticism in order to determine if it does in fact support a symbolic interpretation.

Collins also offers an overview of other scholars who have argued for the close relationship of both stories: "the fig tree symbolizes Israel" (Heinz Giesen); "the fate of

the unfruitful tree is “a proleptic sign prefiguring the destruction of the Temple cultus” (Telford); “a symbolic interrelation between the two stories” (Edwards); “the two “dovetailed episodes” have a “mutually interpretive relationship”” (Marshall) (2007:523-525). Collins (2007:524) comes to the conclusion that “the analyses of von Dobschütz, Lohmeyer, and Shepherd are more persuasive than those of Giesen, Telford, Edwards, Marshall, and Esler.” She also states (as was stated in chapter 1) that “recent studies of orality have placed the whole question of intercalation in a new light.” The orality of Mark 11:12-25 will be addressed in chapter 4.

2.4 Matthew and Mark

While all four canonical gospels include the cleansing of the temple, only Matthew and Mark include the cursing of the fig tree⁸. There are also some differences between their depictions of the cursing of the fig tree. Hendriksen (1975:440), however, does not consider these differences to be of any significance, as he argues that “the former (Matthew) treats this story topically, the later (Mark) chronologically.”⁹ Yong-Eui Yang (2004:79-80), however, argues that the disagreements are significant and have to be accounted for:

There are at least two options to account for these disagreements: (1) those who support the two-source hypothesis of Gospel origins may argue that Matthew has deliberately rearranged Mark’s three-day scheme and reduced it to a two-day scheme ... (2) Those who support the Griesbach hypothesis of Matthean priority may argue that Mark has deliberately rearranged Matthew’s two-day scheme and extended it to a three-day scheme.

Considering these two options, Yong-Eui Yang (2004:82) concludes that “option (2)

⁸ The Gospel of Luke includes the parable of the Barren Fig tree (13:6-9).

⁹ After offering a comparison of Matthew with Mark, Hendriksen (1975:440) indicates that “the Gospel writers were not mere copyists; each tells the story in his own way. The two do not conflict in any way. By supplementing each other they enrich the reader.”

seems more persuasive than option (1).” He believes that although the great majority of scholars support the two-source hypothesis, “the sandwich structure shown in Mark’s Gospel is the result of Mark’s redaction” (Yang 2004:82). In his article, Shepherd also deals with intercalation in Mark and the Synoptic Problem. Shepherd (1991:691) argues that “if Matthew and Luke utilized Mark’s manuscript as a primary source for their Gospels, intercalation ought to be reflected in their work, or, on the other hand, a clear *redaktionsgeschichtlich* reason ought to be explicable for their shift away from both the Markan wording and theological point.” According to Shepherd (1991:697), Luke contains only one and Matthew three of the Markan intercalations. In the case of Luke and Matthew the Markan intercalations also appears to be poorly constructed. Therefore, Shepherd (1991:697) argues that “a lack of the appearance of Markan intercalations with its specialized function in either of these Gospels, without an adequate explanation for its absence, produces strain on the adequacy of the Two Document Hypothesis as a solution to the Synoptic Problem.” Answering the question of which Gospel served as the source for the others is not the focus of this study. This study will only refer to the question of the sources of the Gospels in order to get clarity on how Mark 11:12-25 should be understood.¹⁰

One of the important differences between the two versions is that, while in Matthew the incident of the cursing of the fig tree simply follows on the temple story, in Mark the fig tree story is divided and the temple story is inserted into the middle of the two stories (cf. Table 1).

¹⁰ Different assumptions with regards to which of the Gospels used the other as a source leads to different questions. Under the assumption that Matthew uses Mark, the question arises: Why did Matthew not use the intercalation technique that Mark used to give a symbolic meaning? Did Matthew really understand Mark’s intention to offer a symbolic meaning? Under the assumption that Mark uses Matthew, the question arises: Did Mark use the ‘sandwich technique’ in Mark 11:12-25 in order to give a different message than Matthew? Unlike Matthew, did he rearrange the fig tree story and the temple story to offer a symbolic meaning?

Table 1

Matthew Chapter 21		Mark Chapter 11	
1-11	Entry into Jerusalem	1-11	Entry into Jerusalem
12-17	Cleansing of temple	11-14	Cursing of the fig tree
18-22	Cursing and withering of fig tree	15-19	<i>Cleansing of temple</i>
		20-26	Withering of fig tree
23-27	The question about Jesus's authority	27-33	The question about Jesus's authority

This difference is distinctive, given that both Matthew and Mark include the previous story, the entry into Jerusalem and the following story, the question about Jesus' authority. Furthermore, while in Matthew the cursed tree was withered at once, in Mark the disciples found the withered tree only on the next day. Table 2 shows some of the differences between Matthew and Mark in regard to the cursing and withering of the fig tree in more detail.¹¹

Table 2

Matthew 21	Mark 11
"In the morning, when he returned to the city..." (18)	"On the following day, when they came from Bethany..." (12)
"And seeing a fig tree by the side of the road..." (19)	"Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf..." (13)
-	"for it was not the season for figs" (13)
"May no fruit ever come from you again" (19)	"May no one ever eat fruit from you again" (14)

¹¹Telford (1980:73-74) offers the following differences between Matthew and Mark: a) the chronological scheme; b) the instantaneousness of the miracle; c) the general abbreviation of the content; d) the minor expansions; e) the form of the curse; f) the question posed; g) the mountain-moving saying; h) verse 22.

“And the fig tree withered at once” (19)	“and his disciples heard it” (14)
“When the disciples saw it, they were amazed...” (20)	“In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots” (20)
“Saying, how did the fig tree wither at once?” (20)	“Peter remembered and said to him” “look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered” (21)
“if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done” (21)	“have faith in God” (22) “truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you” (23)
“Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive” (22)	“whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (24)
-	“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.” (25)

Although there are some differences between Matthew and Mark, it is important to note that the basic story is almost the same:¹² they have the same spatial setting (moving from Bethany to Jerusalem) and the same plot (Jesus' hunger; seeing a fig tree; Jesus finds nothing but leaves; so Jesus curses the fig tree; the withering of the fig tree; the disciples discover the withered fig tree; Jesus gives some lessons on faith, and prayer). Above all, the point that is stressed here is that both Matthew and Mark give Jesus' teaching on faith and prayer as the lesson of the cursing of the fig tree. Scholars who believe that Mark's sandwich arrangement is a device that aims to give a symbolic meaning to the cursing of

¹² Telford (1980:73) also admits that “the similarities between the two accounts are very obvious.”

the fig tree, that is a prophecy on the destruction of the temple, tend to ignore this point. Insofar as both Matthew and Mark offer lessons on faith and prayer as a response to the cursing of the fig tree, it appears as if both passages give similar messages¹³. If this is correct, seeing as Mark uses an intercalation unlike Matthew, it is therefore important to understand what the possible function thereof can be.

2.5 Intercalation

A number of contemporary scholars take Mark 11:12-25 to be an intercalation, which Mark intentionally used as a literary device. Understanding Mark's use of this technique is therefore important for analyzing Mark 11:12-25.

According to Shepherd (1991:1), “in the early part of the twentieth century the literary pattern known as intercalation was recognized in Mark.” Edwards (1989:194), however, states that because of the influence of the form-critical method, until recently commentators on the Gospel of Mark have paid relatively little attention to Mark’s A-B-A literary convention, as their focus was not on how a pericope functioned within a narrative. According to Scott G. Brown (2002:78):

With the emergence of redaction, composition, and narrative criticisms, scholars of the Gospel of Mark have come to view its author’s characteristic ways of arranging episodes as literary devices that permit indirect commentary on the arranged incidents. One of the more familiar of these Marcan literary devices is intercalation, or the placing of one basically self-contained episode inside another.

It is thus only with the development of redaction, compositional and narrative criticisms that the intercalations in Mark were taken seriously by scholars. Although Vincent Taylor

¹³ Unlike Matthew, Mark includes a teaching on forgiveness: “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses (v.25).”

(1966:289) argues that “the intercalation of narratives is not a feather of Mark’s method”, there are many scholars who believe that “intercalation is generally considered part of Mark’s narrative art” (Oyen 1992:951). Intercalation was thus recognized by a number of scholars as one of Mark’s characteristics that differentiates it from Matthew and Luke. Mark is, however, not the only Synoptic writer who uses intercalations. In an article, Shepherd (1991:692) states that “in terms of the overall picture of the six intercalations analyzed in my study only *one* of the intercalations is found in Luke and *three* in Matthew.”¹⁴ However, as intercalation in the Synoptic Gospels is not the concern of the current study, the focus thereof will be on various scholars’ understanding of intercalation in Mark.

Intercalations in Mark have been variously identified as insertions (Nineham), interpolations (Kee), framing (Rhoads and Michie), and as a sandwich construction (Edwards). There has also been a variety of theories on why Mark uses intercalations. According to Shepherd (1991:2), Ernst Von Dobschütz “proposed that it served the purpose of filling up a gap of space or time within the main narrative.” Nineham (1968:112) states that “St Mark is fond of insertions between two halves of a single story, time being thus given for the initial action to develop.” Unlike Nineham, Kee uses a different term, interpolation, and similarly (1977:54) argues that “one of the striking stylistic features of Mark ... is the way Mark has inserted material as a unit in the middle of another unit.” According to Kee (1977:54), the interpolation technique functions in a variety of ways in Mark. He (Kee 1977:56) concludes:

Thus the interpolation procedure serves in some cases to alter the tradition in order to make it more directly useful or acceptable to the community of Mark, or to heighten its dramatic impact, or to demonstrate the conformity of the trial and death of Jesus to what God had ordained in scripture.

Rhoads and Michie prefer the term “framing” as one of the narrative patterns. They

¹⁴ Shepherd (1991:697) argues that: “A lack of the appearance of Markan intercalation with its specialized function in either of these Gospels, without an adequate explanation for its absence, produce strain on the adequacy of the Two Document Hypothesis as a solution to the Synoptic Problem.”

suggest two effects of framing; firstly, that “the framing device creates suspense ... such suspense maintains the reader’s interest, enticing him or her to pay attention to the future direction of the story.” The second is that framing also provides commentary by comparison or contrasts. “The two related stories illuminate and enrich each other, commenting on and clarifying the meaning, one of the other” (1982:51).

However, in his doctoral thesis, Wright argues that “an interpolation” and “a frame” are two understandings of intercalation that is based on a number of misconceptions. Wright (1985:15-16) asserts:

The focus in an interpolation is on an original unit, usually the outer story, into which there has been inserted an intervening episode. Scholars who use this language most often do not operate out of the understanding of the Gospel of Mark as a literary narrative...By defining an intercalation as an interpolation, the picture of the whole is lost. Further, the word interpolation implies that there existed some original story into which an editor has inserted some additional story. A second misconception is to refer to the technique of intercalation under the general rubric of framing. The writer of Mark does use the technique of framing...but there is a difference between framing and intercalation. Framing places too much emphasis on the outer halves of a unit, and too little emphasis on the inner part.

Wright (1985:16) argues that “the intercalations must be considered in the light of the larger pattern of redundancy found throughout the Gospel of Mark.” In other words, “the intercalations work in the service of the plot of the Gospel to assist the unfolding of the identity of Jesus and to show a number of responses to him (Wright 1985:222).”¹⁵

Schildgen (1998:100) claims that “the effect of the device is disconcerting, even abrasive,

¹⁵ After analyzing twelve intercalations in Mark, Wright (1985:220-228) concludes “the intercalations in the first half of the Gospel assert the authority of Jesus and reveal various responses to his authority ... The intercalation in the second half of the Gospel continue to unfold the identity of Jesus and to show various response to him.”

because it interrupts the main narrative and suspends its time while another story is told.” Donahue (1973:60) argues that “Mark uses the technique of intercalation, not simply as literary device to create the illusion of passing time, but in terms of a theological interest in relating the disciples to the work and fate of Jesus.” Donahue (1973:62) further indicates:

Therefore in Mark the framing sections and intercalated material make up a carefully articulated dialogue, where sections leading to the suffering and death of Jesus are framed by discipleship material. Thus, Mark uses the technique of intercalation to underscore two major themes of his gospel, the way of suffering of Jesus, and the necessity of the disciple to follow Jesus on this way.

Dewey (1980:22) disputes Donahue’s views, as follows:

More basically, Donahue’s use of literary techniques as a direct indicator of theology ignores the reality of the gospel as narrative. Intercalation is primarily a literary device and should be studied first in rhetorical terms, to see how the intercalation affects the progression of the narrative. Only when its literary function is understood, can one correctly interpret how an intercalation may add to our understanding of Mark’s theology. Further, intercalations may function differently from each other.

Edwards, however, agrees with Donahue’s point; the purpose of Markan sandwiches are theological and not solely literary, but Edwards (1989:216) claims that “their purpose cannot be limited, as Donahue supposes, to the way of Jesus’ suffering and the necessity of discipleship.” Edwards prefers the term sandwich and (1989:196) argues:

Mark sandwiches one passage into the middle of another with an intentional and discernible *theological purpose*. The technique is, to be sure, a literary technique, but its purpose is theological; that is, the sandwiches emphasize the major motifs of the Gospel, especially the meaning of faith, discipleship, bearing witness, and the dangers of apostasy ... *the middle story nearly always*

provides the key to the theological purpose of the sandwich.

However, unlike Edwards' argument that the inner story is more important than the outer story, Fowler stresses the equality of both the inner and outer stories. He (1991:143) argues that "the frame episode and the framed episode are thus placed on a par with each other, with neither having priority, either logically or chronologically."¹⁶

Throughout his doctoral thesis, Shepherd tried to analyze six intercalations in Mark. In relation to the definition and function of intercalations, Shepherd (1991:328) concludes that "intercalation is the Markan literary style by which the Evangelist interrupts the flow of one story with another individual story in order to produce a dramatized irony between key characters and their actions." In other words, for Shepherd (1991:328) intercalation is about the Evangelist bringing two stories together, and yet maintaining their separateness, in order to produce dramatized irony.

Shepherd (1991:327-328) also offers eight unique characteristics that occurs in intercalations.

1. Apart from initial focalization, the outer story is the temporal border of the inner story.
2. There is a unique pattern of focalization and defocalization of the two stories, which includes incomplete defocalization of the outer story at the point where breakaway occurs to the inner story. This creates a "gap" for the outer story across the inner story.
3. A new character or newly named character is noted at the reentry into the outer story.
4. Active character crossover does not occur between the two stories, except for Jesus.
5. Parallel actions are done by contrasting groups or contrasting actions are

¹⁶ "Intercalation is narrative sleight of hand, a crafty manipulation of the discourse level that creates the illusion that two episodes are taking place simultaneously. In an intercalation neither episode has begun until both have begun, and neither is concluded until both are concluded" (Fowler 1991:143-144).

done by parallel groups in the two stories.

6. The outer story has an elliptical action, which crosses the inner story and contrasts with the actions of the inner story.

7. The plots of the two stories are interlinked, following a turn-return pattern.

8. An ellipsis of the outer story occurs across the inner story.

Telford (1980:48) also highlights the mutual interpretation of the different stories by each other. He argues that “these intercalations, moreover, may not simply be a device, in the manner of the skilled raconteur, to fill up a space of time in the ongoing narrative (so von Dobschiltz) but may be intended in certain cases to point the reader to a significant parallel between both pericopes.” Similarly, France (2002:436) also states this “is one of the more elaborate examples of Mark’s tendency to weave separate incidents together by shifting the spotlight to and fro between two narrative scenes, so as to enable the reader to interpret each incident in the light of the other.”

According to Marshall (1989:12), Frans Neirynck claims ‘duality’ as a distinctive feature of Mark, and sandwich arrangements as a ‘two-step progressive device’ or ‘duality’.¹⁷ Marshall (1989:12) states:

Duality refers to the repetitions, pleonasms and duplications found at nearly every level of Mark’s composition, ranging from individual words, phrases and sentences up to larger scale pericope-doublets and sandwich arrangements. Whereas such duplicate features in Mark have been customarily regarded as evidence of diverse sources, Neirynck finds that duality is ‘one of Mark’s most characteristic features of style’, acting as a ‘two-step progressive device’ in which the second item adds clarity or precision to the first.

Johnson explains intercalation as part of Mark’s style, as he has a preference for a

¹⁷ According to Fowler (1991:143), “the intercalations exhibit a hermeneutical function for duality. The intercalated episodes are sharply opposed to each other, but at the same they frequently contain so many verbal echoes of each other that the reader can scarcely fail to take up the implicit invitation to read the famed episode in the light of the frame episode and vice versa.”

threefold pattern of events or sayings. According to Johnson (1986:162), “it has long been noted that Mark has a fondness for threefold patterns.”¹⁸ He (1986:163) argues that “this can be seen first in his frequent use of literary intercalation. In its smallest form, two fragments of one story frame a third passage in something of a sandwich arrangement.”

In this chapter, various opinions were offered about the literary function of an intercalation in a text. Although many scholars agree that intercalation is a literary device that Mark uses, there is no consensus about the definition and function of intercalations. In this regard, Edwards (1989:195) argues that “they recognize that Mark intentionally sandwiches one account into another, but they cannot agree what he achieves by doing so.” Edwards (1989:195-196) offers some examples in this regard: some scholars simply note Mark's sandwiches without discussing their purpose; others think that Mark employs his sandwich technique to heighten suspense or allow for the passage of time; others believe that the sandwiching of two stories together intends to establish a relationship between the stories, even if the exact nature of the relationship cannot be identified; a few scholars suggest that the purpose of Mark's sandwich technique is not in itself literary but *theological*.

Furthermore, Shepherd (1991:3-4) points out that “the nineteen scholars listed in the Appendix propose a total of twenty passages as intercalations, but all of them agree on only two passages.” According to Shepherd (1991:4), it is thus very difficult to study intercalations:

Not only are there **questions about the interpretation of the literary technique of intercalation**, there is also **questions about exactly where it appears in Mark**. Different scholars have provided varying lists of passages where they believe the phenomenon occurs. This variability seems to be related to the way different scholars define intercalation. The difficulty appears to

¹⁸ According to Johnson (1986:162-163), Mark “puts together three seed parables (4:3-32), three popular opinions about John (6:14-15), three popular opinions about Jesus (8:27-28), three predictions of the Passion (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34), three failures of the disciples to stay awake in the garden (14:32-42), three denials of Jesus by Peter (14:66-72). This is more than simple fascination with a number or a law of folklore.”

involve a lack of precision in definition¹⁹ (emphasis I Ok).

In summary, numerous understandings of intercalation have been surveyed in this section. Generally, intercalation is regarded as a literary tool that Mark used in his Gospel. The structure of an intercalation resembles an A-B-A structure, the so-called ‘sandwich’. Some scholars regard the intercalation as Mark’s redaction; that is, one story is placed in the center of another story. Others hold the view that intercalation was Mark’s writing style, which included ‘duality’ or a ‘threefold pattern’. Moreover, there is no unified answer about what an intercalation does in the text. The following functions of intercalations have been suggested: filling up a gap of space or time (Dobschütz), to heighten its dramatic impact (Kee), creating suspense (Rhoads and Michie), disconcerting (Schildgen), to produce a dramatized irony (Shepherd), the mutual interpretation of inner and outer stories (Rhoads and Michie, Telford, France), and some theological purpose (Donahue, Edwards). There is also the question about where exactly it occurs in Mark (Shepherd 1991:4), furthermore, intercalations can function differently from each other as well (Dewey 1980:22). Thus, the researcher argues that there is no consensus on the definition and function of intercalation. To therefore interpret Mark 11:12-25 according to a fixed understanding of the function of the possible intercalation (e.g. for mutual interpretation or for a specific theological purpose), is methodologically irresponsible. Instead, there needs to be an examination of whether the text itself supports a specific function of an intercalation. In the next chapter, Mark 11:12-25 will therefore be studied through narrative criticism and by focusing on the oral aspect contained therein.

2.6 Conclusion

Earlier in this chapter, a brief history of the study of Mark was given. Although the Gospel of the Mark was treated as having little value up to the nineteenth century, it became the

¹⁹ So, throughout his dissertation, Shepherd (1991:4) tried to answer two questions: “First, what is the definition of intercalation? Second, what is the function of intercalation in Markan interpretation?” Although Shepherd offers the definition and function of intercalation as mentioned previously, it is just one among various opinions as there is no consensus on what is meant by the term intercalation.

focus of scholarly study thereafter, culminating with the realization that it was the earliest Gospel. In general, the Two-Source hypothesis, that is that Matthew and Luke used Mark and Q, is still accepted by many scholars, even though it cannot solve every Synoptic problem.

A history of the investigation of the passage studied by numerous scholars, including Telford, was also undertaken. Although Telford's works have influenced many, the researcher suggested a different understanding of Mark 11:22-25 to that of Telford and those who support his position.

Among the four Gospels, only Matthew and Mark include both the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of temple. Therefore, comparing Mark with Matthew is important to this study, even if it is not a source critical study. The researcher briefly highlighted the differences and similarities between Matthew and Mark. Although there are some differences in detail between Matthew and Mark, it was argued that they are basically the same story, especially given that both Matthew and Mark include Jesus' teaching of faith and prayer. If they relate a similar message this raises the question as to what function "intercalation" has in Mark.

Since the literary pattern known as intercalation was recognized in Mark in the early part of the twentieth century (Shepherd 1991:1), there has been an increase in scholars who write about intercalations in Mark, as has been presented previously. Although various options concerning the role of intercalations have been presented by scholars, the different understandings of intercalation make it more difficult to interpret our passage. Simply, following the function of intercalation claimed by some scholars, namely, interpreting each other, can be very dangerous. Therefore, a study on whether the narrative itself supports a mutual interpreting function or a theological purpose of the intercalation is crucial. This will be undertaken in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The narrative analysis of Mark 11:12-25

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the history of the study of the gospel of Mark, the synoptic problem, and of the understanding of intercalation was surveyed. Different understandings of intercalation raised the necessity of studying what the text itself reveals. Therefore, in this chapter, the researcher will examine the focus passage of this study by undertaking a narrative analysis thereof. Narrative analysis focuses on the narrative itself and analyzes the Gospels as a sustained story. In the New Testament, the four Gospels and the book of Acts were written in as narratives. The recognition of this means that “the narrative must be understood as a whole”; that is, “an author writes a narrative from beginning to end, and it must be approached as a unified utterance” (Moloney 2004:31). By analyzing the narrative of Mark, it is possible to obtain a better understanding of the literary function of Mark 11:11-25. In analyzing the literary function of this passage, the researcher will attempt to ascertain if the dominant understanding thereof as prophesying the destruction of the temple is correct. Finally, it will ask what the function of the intercalation in the narrative is.

3.2 Narrative analysis as method

Before considering narrative analysis as a method, two older methods have to be referred to first, in order to understand narrative analysis as an appropriate method for analyzing narratives. In the twentieth century, before the development of narrative analysis, form criticism and redaction criticism were the two dominant methods in New Testament research. A brief explanation of these two methods will be given before arguing for the

appropriateness of narrative analysis as a method by comparing it with both.

Form criticism was developed by twentieth century scholarship, and was deeply influenced by source criticism that had in turn been developed in the nineteenth century (McKnight 1969:3). “Source criticism, however, is merely the starting point for form criticism, for when form criticism is seen as the task of discovering the original units of the Synoptic tradition and of establishing the earlier history of the units, the written source of any particular unit is a matter of indifference” (McKnight 1969:17). Whereas source criticism thus seeks the original sources of a present text, form criticism tries to uncover the developmental stages behind a text.

Form criticism was initially developed by scholars like Gunkel, in order to study the Old Testament texts. Gunkel’s form critical research on Genesis was, however, soon applied to the Gospel tradition by scholars such as Schmidt, Dibelius and Bultmann, in order to study it as literature. Kee (1977:5) relates Dibelius’ estimate of the literary quality of the evangelists, especially of Matthew and Mark, as follows (1977:5):

Without a doubt these are unliterary writings. They should not and could not be compared with ‘literary’ works ... They are collections of material. The composers are only to the smallest extent authors. They are principally collectors of tradition, editors. Before all else their labour consists in handing down, grouping, and working over the material which has come to them.

According to Hooker, (1983:2) “the work of form critics such as Dibelius and Bultmann pointed to the fact that the material in the Gospels had not, originally, been part of a connected narrative, but consisted of individual, isolated stories about Jesus.” They assumed that “the tradition consists basically of individual sayings and narratives joined together in the Gospels by the work of the editors” (McKnight 1969:18). Because tradition addressed the needs and purposes of the early church, uncovering the conditions and interest of the early church was very important. Bultmann (1968:4) argues:

The proper understanding of form-criticism rests upon the judgment that the

literature in which the life of a given community, even the primitive Christian community, has taken shape, springs out of quite definite conditions and wants of life from which grows up a quite definite style and quite specific forms and categories. Thus every literary category has its 'life situation' (*Sitz im Leben*: Gunkel), whether it be worship in its different forms, or work, or hunting, or war.

Form criticism tried to determine which of the words or deeds attributed to Jesus go back to Jesus himself and which were likely to be the product of the early church. "The aim of form-criticism is to determine the original form of a piece of narrative, a dominical saying or a parable. In the process we learn to distinguish secondary additions and forms, and these in turn lead to important results for the history of the tradition" (Bultmann 1968:6). Therefore, their concern is not with the story as it is expressed in the Gospel text, with the result that they did not read the existent Gospel texts as unified stories.

Redaction criticism was adapted out of source criticism and form criticism, and came into full bloom in the work of Bornkamm, Conzelmann, and Marxsen after the Second World War. Among them, Marxsen proposed the term *Redaktionsgeschichte*, which is translated as redaction criticism. According to Perrin (1969:1), redaction criticism "is concerned with studying the theological motivation of an author as this is revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing, and modification of traditional material, and in the composition of new material or the creation of new forms within the traditions of early Christianity."

In relation to redaction criticism, "Wrede's thesis opened the way for the study of the dogmatic ideas and theological conceptions that were at work in the tradition" (Perrin 1969:12). However, unlike Wrede, who minimized the abilities of the evangelist Mark, redaction criticism tends to think of the evangelist as having a much more positive and creative role (Perrin 1969:12-13). This is one of the differences between the two approaches: Form criticism regarded the evangelists primarily as collectors of tradition, whereas redaction criticism regarded them as authors in their own right. However, there are also similarities between the approaches. According to Perrin, as form criticism does, redaction criticism deals primarily with the idea of a threefold *Sitz im Leben*; (1) setting

in the life of Jesus; (2) setting in the life and work of the early church; (3) setting in the work and purpose of the evangelist (1969:34-35). Like form criticism, redaction criticism thus also had a diachronic approach to the text, which seeks to look behind it. Therefore, redaction criticism also failed to consider the Gospel stories as a unified whole. Hooker (2011:165-166) summarizes:

In the early twentieth century, however, the rise of form criticism concentrated attention on the individual pericopes, which were likened to “pearls on a string,” arranged in haphazard order, just as Papias had said - though the material itself was no longer regarded as reliable. Redaction criticism, the next major development, looked at the ways in which the Evangelists had *changed* the tradition, so was unhelpful in looking at the earliest Gospel, though attempts were made to distinguish Mark’s style. It was, however, the growing emphasis on literary-critical approaches that led scholars to consider the Gospel as narrative, an insight set out definitively in the original edition of *Mark as Story*.

With regards to the limitations of the historical-critical method, including form criticism and redaction criticism, Hans Frei (Frei 1974) points out that they fail to take seriously the narrative character of the Gospels.²⁰ Influenced by the development of the New Criticism in the 1940s and literary criticism in a number of secular studies, biblical scholars began to see the gospel as a sustained story. Marshall (1989:13) states that “the basic principle for interpreting a literary work is that it must be accepted in the form in which it stands, for this is how the reader encounters it.” According to Horsley (2006:vii), “in the 1970s, some interpreters began reading the Gospels as sustained narratives rather than continuing the standard focus on individual sayings and pericopes.” This was the beginning of what would be called narrative analysis, narrative criticism and the narrative approach. According to Powell (2011:19), “at least initially, narrative criticism was more descriptive of an orientation to Gospel study than it was of a particular exegetical method. The term was employed in distinction from ‘historical criticism’ (an orientation out of

²⁰ Boomershtine (2011:115) notes that “by close attention to the intrinsic features of Mark as a narrative, a new body of scholarship had drawn a rich picture of Mark that has begun the process of removing the shadow that Hans Frei aptly named the ‘eclipse’ of biblical narrative.”

which had developed ‘the historical-critical method’). In relating to the narrative genre of the Gospel according to Mark, these approaches led to fresh insights in the understanding of the Gospels” (Achte-meier, Green et al. 2001:124).

If Mark was the first Evangelist, then why did he choose to communicate in the form of a narrative? Other forms of response to community struggles had already been pioneered - Paul’s letters, for example. What realities led to Mark’s decision to sketch the public life of Jesus in the form of a biographical narrative? We might be helped by refocusing the question: What do narratives do well?²¹

In this quotation, the important thing is that it is crucial to recognize the genre of the gospel of Mark in order to understand it. Narrative analysis as a method is appropriate in this regard, seeing as the gospel of Mark was written in the form of a narrative. Shepherd also argues (1991:38) that “since intercalation is a textual strategy, it may be that the diachronic focus of form criticism and redaction criticism has played a role in the lack of clarity concerning the definition and function of intercalation in Mark.”

As has been seen, form criticism and redaction criticism each have something to contribute in New Testament research. However, they also have certain limitations, as they do not focus on the extent of the text itself or on it as a sustained story in the case of the gospels. Because of these limitations, there is a need for an alternative method, which allows for the storytelling nature and significance of different textual strategies, such as that of narratives.

Narrative analysis is a synchronic literary method which focuses on the examination of the story and discourse of a narrative as it is in written form (Shepherd 1991:38).

²¹ “First, they encourage in their audiences a sense of affinity, or identification, with their central character or characters....Second, narratives are capable of indicating the rich interrelations among the many forces that help to shape human experiences in concrete situations...Third, narratives work to draw their audiences into their words so as to undergird shared values or to challenge the imaginations and views of their audiences as well as their thoughts and practices” (Achte-meier, Green et al. 2001:124).

Although narrative analysis also has its limitations (e.g. a lack of historical concern), it has the advantage of concentration on the narrative as it stands. Powell (1990:85-91) suggests eight benefits of narrative criticism:

1. Narrative criticism focuses on the text of Scripture itself.
2. Narrative criticism provides insight into biblical texts for which the historical background is uncertain.
3. Narrative criticism provides for checks and balances on traditional methods.
4. Narrative criticism tends to bring scholars and nonprofessional Bible readers closer together.
5. Narrative criticism stands in a close relationship to the believing community.
6. Narrative criticism offers potential for bringing believing communities together.
7. Narrative criticism offers fresh interpretations of biblical material.
8. Narrative criticism unleashes the power of biblical stories for personal and social transformation.

These advantages of narrative analysis make it a suitable approach for this study. This methodology can not only give us a more profound understanding of the relationship between the fig tree story and the temple story, but also whether ‘intercalation’ in our passages functions with a theological purpose or as an example of mutual interpretation, as it is argued by some scholars. According to Powell (1990:23), the central question of narrative analysis is: “How does the implied author guide the implied reader in understanding the story?” Powell (1990:23-34) indicates that the implied author guides the reader by insisting that the reader adopt a point of view consistent with that of the narrative; the use of a narrator; rhetorical devices such as symbolism and irony; and the use of narrative patterns. In analyzing how the author of Mark guides his readers, the researcher will focus on the setting, characters, and events in Mark 11:12-25.

3.3 A narrative analysis of Mark 11:12-25

3.3.1 Setting

The settings of a story forms the context for the conflicts and the actions of the characters therein (Rhoads and Michie 1982:63; Powell 1990:69). This context cannot be alienated from the story, since settings are essential to the plot thereof. Rhoads and Michie (1982:63) note:

generating atmosphere, determining conflict, revealing traits in the characters who must deal with problems or threats caused by the settings, offering commentary (sometimes ironic) on the action, and evoking associations and nuances of meaning present in the culture of the readers. Settings may even provide structure to a story, in addition to conveying important themes. Settings can be no less significant for a story than stage sets are for theater drama.

We cannot exist apart from time, space and the circumstances in which we live. In the same way, settings orientate characters in the story in regard to time, space and place, so that the setting in literature is integral to the story. “Settings in the story are never presented for their own sake and are always at the service of the plot and/or theme” (Shim 1994:126). Chatman (1978:141) notes that the chief function of settings is “to contribute to the mood of the narrative.”

Abrams (1999:284) defines “the overall setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs.” In this chapter, however, excluding social setting²², the researcher will deal with both spatial and temporal settings.

²² Social and spiritual settings will be dealt briefly in relating to character and events later.

3.3.1.1 The setting of Mark 11:11-25

3.3.1.1.1 Spatial Setting

In the Gospel of Mark, “the first half of the story has a setting in Galilee, the second half in Jerusalem²³” (Rhoads & Michie 1982:63). According to Donahue and Harrington (2002:21), “Galilee and Jerusalem are not simply the two major locales of Jesus’ ministry but also have theological importance that is communicated early in the gospel.” The two stories, the fig tree and the temple cleansing story exist in the second half of the gospel of Mark and so occur in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, the center of politics, the economy, culture and religion, the symbol of authority for the high priests and legal experts. As a spatial setting, Jerusalem evokes an atmosphere of expectation and tension in Mark’s story.²⁴ “Just as Jesus had encountered opposition in the synagogues in Galilee, he now meets intense opposition from all the authorities. In Jerusalem Jesus is under constant threat” (Rhoads & Michie 1982:71). In Mark 11:1-10, however, Jesus goes into Jerusalem with many people hailing him as a king. Furthermore, in both stories, Jesus shows his authority to rule over nature and the human world. He cursed a fig tree with no fruit and cleaned the temple so that it would recover its original function.

Wright (1985:155) states that “the time and space referents link together the two stories in an acceptably progressive chronology.” His statement is right, but it should not be forgotten that the previous and following stories are also connected to each other within time and space. It is therefore crucial to survey the spatial and temporal setting of Mark 11 in order to understand the whole story, seeing as the chain of events in Mark 11 is connected naturally by place and time.

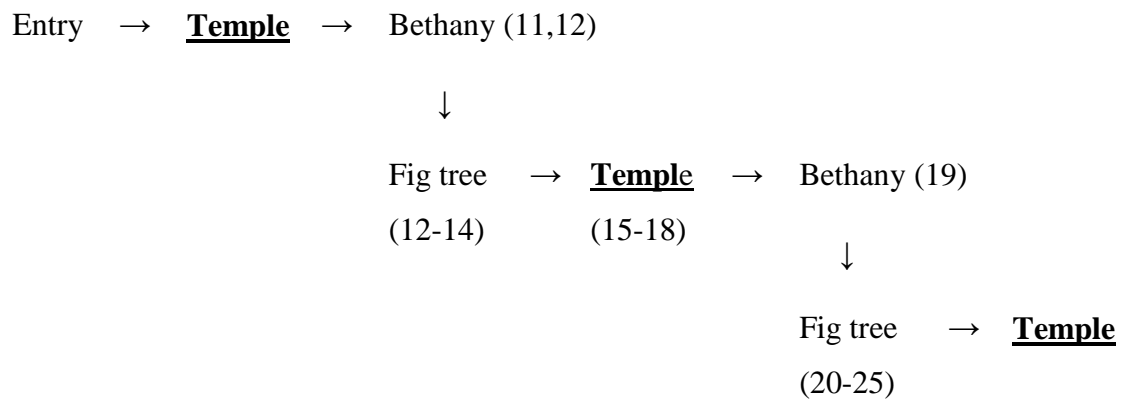
Mark 11:12 begins with “On the following day”, which occurs only in Mark. The cursing

²³ According to Dewey (2011:1821), “the episodes of Jesus’ public ministry are organized geographically: Galilee (1:14-8:21), a journey from north of Galilee south to Jerusalem (8:22—10:52), and Jerusalem (11:1-13:37), with a promise of return to Galilee (14:28; 16:7). Within this overall geographical framework, the episodes are grouped according to general content.”

²⁴ According to Dewey (2011:1821), “the Jerusalem ministry presents Jesus’ provocative action in the temple, controversies between Jesus and Jewish groups about Jewish understandings, and finally Jesus’ prediction of future events after his passion.”

of the fig tree story is naturally connected to the previous story. Evans (2001:153) states that “the evangelist has added this detail as a transition from the entrance narrative.” Mark 11:1-11,²⁵ the previous story, depicts Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. With the entry into Jerusalem, Jesus’ last week has started according to Mark. Verse 11, along with verse 12, provides the clues connecting Jesus’ movements to and from Jerusalem, and reveals a number of important pieces of information. Verse 11 states: “Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.” Collins argued that “the repetition of the place-name ‘Bethany’ in vv. 11 and 12 simply serves to assist the listening audience in following the thread of the narrative” (2007:525). However, there are crucial repetitions of the place-names in the whole of Mark 11 that helps to plot the movement of Jesus and his disciples (cf. Table 3).

Table 3



As table 3 shows, Jesus visited the temple on three occasions; vv. 11, 15, 27 said that “Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple.” Therefore, the most important place in Mark 11 is the temple. After he had visited the temple, Jesus and his disciples went twice to Bethany at night. The reason for this is that they may have needed a place to sleep.

²⁵ Contra Gundry (1993:635) states that “v 11 starts a new pericope rather than finishing off the previous one.”

In Mark 11:12-25, before entering the temple, Jesus and his disciples pass a fig tree; after entering Jerusalem on the following day, Jesus cursed the fig tree, and on the next day, he found the fig tree withered from its roots, and finally, Jesus taught his disciples about faith, prayer, and forgiveness. Each event in Mark 11 occurred at a definite space, as table 3 shows.

In relating the spatial setting of the incident, one of the most important questions is: where was the fig tree which Jesus cursed? Although no one can know the exact place, seeing that the Bible does not mention it, we know that the fig tree was placed on the way between Bethany and Jerusalem that led to the temple. It was thus natural that Jesus had to go past the fig tree on his way to the temple. Both stories, the cursing of the fig tree (12-14) and the withering of the fig tree (20-25), occurred before Jesus and his disciples entered the temple.

3.3.1.1.2 Temporal Settings

The cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple are important elements of the last week of Jesus' ministry. As it is well known, Jesus' last week and his crucifixion occupy a crucial part in the Synoptic gospels. With regards to the last week, two stories related to the fig tree are important.

Whereas both the cursing of the fig tree (vv. 12-14) and the withering of the fig tree (vv. 20-25) must have happened at the same place, somewhere on the way from Bethany to the temple, the two incidents took place on different days (cf. Table 4).

Table 4

First day	Triumphal entry	11:1-10
	Visit to temple and return to Bethany	11:11
Second day	Cursing of fig tree	11:12-14
	Entry into temple	11:15
	Temple “cleansing” episode	11:15-18
	Return to Bethany	11:19
Third day	Jesus' teaching	11:20-25
	Entry into temple	11:27
	Question about Jesus' authority	11:27-33

As table 4 shows, Mark's narrative states that Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple for three consecutive days²⁶. During these three days, Jesus and his disciples went into Jerusalem and the temple during the daytime, and then to Bethany for the night. As the aforementioned spatial setting shows, Jesus' movements in Mark 11 is natural in regard to space and time as it is depicted in the gospel of Mark.

This point of identifying the definite spatial and temporal settings is that it shows that the author of Mark did not intentionally arrange the juxtaposition of the fig tree and the temple. All that Mark is doing is describing Jesus' entry into and away from Jerusalem, as it happened in his narrative. He is not necessarily deliberately creating a link between the fig tree and the temple. In other words, Mark is making a point about the time and space in which the ministry of Jesus takes place, and is not creating a literary and theological link between the fig tree and the temple. Furthermore, this feature is different to other passages commonly accepted as intercalations in Mark. Shepherd (1991) refers to six passages (Mark 3:20-35; 5:21-43; 6:7-32; 11:12-25; 14:1-11; and 14:53-72) commonly accepted as being intercalations. It is therefore, important to briefly examine these passages in relation to the spatial and temporal settings.

²⁶ Although the three days scheme of the Mark has been disputed by some scholars, its defense is not the aim of this research.

Table 5

Passage	Spatial and temporal settings
3:20-35	("then he went home" (v. 19)) "standing outside" (v.31)
5:21-43	"when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side"(v. 21) "while he was still speaking"(v. 35)
6:7-32	"and they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves" (v. 32)
11:12-25	("as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve" (v. 11)) "On the following day, when they came from Bethany" (v. 12) "And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city" (v.19) "In the morning as they passed by"(v.20)
14:1-11	"it was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread" (v. 1) "while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper"(v. 3)
14:53-72	"They took Jesus to the high priest" (v.53) "Into the courtyard of the high priest" (v.54) "While Peter was below in the courtyard" (v. 66)

As table 5 shows, with the exception of 11:12-25, there are few clues about the *spatial* and *temporal* settings of the events forming the intercalations in these examples. Even though there are some clues, it is not enough to naturally connect the inner story with the outer story. *This is natural in regards to the definition and identification of an intercalation.* According to Edwards (1989:193), an intercalation is "breaking up a story or pericopes by inserting a second, seemingly unrelated, story into the middle of it." The inner and outer stories thus remain connected with regards to their spatial and temporal settings. Therefore, the researcher argues that it is incorrect to regard Mark 11:12-24 as an intercalation, as it contains more than one change in regard to its spatial and temporal setting.

3.3.2 Characters

Characters²⁷ are not only a central element of the story world (Rhoads & Michie 1982:101), but are also the actors in a story; they are the ones who carry out the various activities that comprise the plot (Powell 1990:51). The readers or audience tend to naturally pay attention to characters, thus their understanding of the characters in a story is essential to interpreting the story. In the story world, characters lead the whole story; characters think of something, talk to someone, perform particular actions, create events, solve problems, and so on. Therefore, the following statement (Rhoads & Michie 1982:101) is correct; “an analysis of the characters in Mark’s story inevitably overlaps with the analysis of the conflicts, since the characters are so integrally related to the plot.”

Powell (1990:52) states that the implied author of the canonical Gospels reveal characters in their narratives through the technique of telling and showing. In the Gospels, the narrator can speak directly to the reader about characters, for example, noting that Joseph was a righteous man (Matt. 1:19). This technique of telling presents “the implied author’s view of the characters in a way that is blatant but accessible” (Powell 1990:52). The technique of showing is less precise than that of telling, but it is usually more interesting and is a preferred method of characterization (Powell 1990:52). With regards to showing, the reader must work harder in order to grasp the implied author’s view of a character.

What is revealed through the use of the techniques of both telling and showing? Powell (1990:53) suggests two important aspects of characterization, namely the evaluative point of view and character traits.

²⁷ It is true that while most of the characters are human beings, there does not always have to be a human being in the story world. For example, the serpent plays a major role in the third chapter of Genesis, and in some literature, animals and other objects can become characters. Furthermore, it is possible for a group to function as a single character (Powell 1990:51). For instance, in the Synoptic Gospels, the crowds, Jesus’ disciples and the religious leaders function as different, single characters.

3.3.2.1 The characters in Mark 11:12-25

3.3.2.1.1 Jesus

In Mark 11:12-25, Jesus is the main character. Jesus curses the fig tree, cleans the temple, and gives a number of lessons. He thus leads and dominates both stories. Therefore, the readers need to pay attention to the character of Jesus in both stories. What is the characterization of Jesus that the implied author wants to guide the reader with? Is this characterization of Jesus in both stories consistent with the character of Jesus in the whole story of Mark?

“On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry” (11:12). Why does Jesus feel hunger at the scene? Jesus’ hunger is the starting point of every event that followed. Vincent Taylor (1966:459) states “the statement that Jesus hungered prepares the way for the story, indicating that He sought to satisfy a physical need.” When He was hungry, He found a fig tree in leaf, and came to it closely. Finally, Jesus found nothing but leaves, and cursed the fig tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” (11:14).

For some scholars, the cursing of the fig story is out of character for Jesus. Lane (1974:400) states that “the unexpected and incongruous character of Jesus’ action in looking for figs at a season when no fruit could be found would stimulate curiosity and point beyond the incident to its deeper significance.”²⁸ T. W. Manson (1951:279) remarks that “it is a tale of miraculous power wasted in the service of ill-temper (for the supernatural energy employed to blast the unfortunate tree might have been more usefully expended in forcing a crop of figs out of season); as it stands it is simply incredible.” Erdman (1917:166) argues that “if it were not that the purpose of Jesus was to teach a solemn and important lesson, his act would have been unreasonable, petulant, wanton.” He (1917:166) believes that “it has a definite reference to the guilty nation which was about to reject and to kill its King.”

²⁸ Anderson (1976:263) argues that “it is inherently irrational, for why should a tree be cursed for not bearing figs out of season.”

Gundry (1993:636), however, argues that Jesus' cursing of the fig tree is appropriate. Focusing on Mark's use of the term "something", rather than "figs" or "fruit", Gundry (1993:636) highlights that Jesus did not hope to find ripe figs. That is why the narrator said it was not the season for them (v.14). "Jesus could hope to find only buds which form just before and as the tree leafs and for whose presence leaves might therefore excite a realistic hope" (Gundry 1993). Wuest (1950:220) also said that "it was reasonable to expect a premature crop of figs." If there are no buds at that time, no fruit would come later. Hendriksen (1975:442) argues "it had leaves, was most likely in full foliage, and could therefore be expected to have fruit. Yet, it had nothing but leaves! It promised much but provided nothing."

In addition, Jesus has authority to destroy unclean spirits and to control nature as an agent of God's rule in the Gospel of Mark (Rhoads & Michie 1982:78). Rhoads and Michie (Rhoads & Michie 1982:78) argue as follows:

By quelling demons Jesus demonstrates that God's rule over the world has begun, has come "near." Other displays of power also attest to that. Jesus commands the wind and the sea, provides bread and fish for hungry people in the desert, and **causes a fig tree to wither to the roots**. Furthermore, Jesus forgives sin, removes leprosy, heals illnesses, removes afflictions, and restores sight, hearing, and a twisted limb. Jesus also empowers his disciples with authority to exorcise and to heal, and he expects them to exercise authority over nature; **by faith, they can move mountains**. In the world of the story, these powerful acts make it manifest that God is establishing his rule (emphasis I Ok).

In this quotation, Rhoads and Michie use the cursing of the fig tree as an example of the authority of Jesus governing nature. Therefore, it can be argued that the function of Mark 11:12-25 is to show the undivided character of Jesus, and the consistent teaching of Jesus reveals his authority that he exercises in the whole of Mark, and that it does not attempt to give a symbolic meaning through an event that is incongruous with the character of Jesus, as it is revealed in Mark.

3.3.2.1.2 Disciples

In Mark 11:12-25, the disciples appear in the following scenes:

“when they came from Bethany” (11:12)

“his disciples heard it” (11:14)

“they came to Jerusalem” (11:15)

“they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots.” (11:20)

“Peter remembered and said to him, Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” (11:21)

Like many other stories in the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples follow Jesus everywhere he goes in both stories. Thus, the Synoptic Gospels often refer to “they”, binding Jesus and the disciples together. But, unlike Jesus who acts actively, the disciples are portrayed as acting passively. When Jesus curses the fig tree, his disciples just heard his words (v14).²⁹ When Jesus drives out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, the implied author does not say what the disciples did. No one could discern whether the disciples helped Jesus or just witnessed what Jesus did. However, compared with the characterization of Jesus, the disciples are clearly passive. Although the disciples follow Jesus everywhere, they could not do anything along with Jesus. All that the disciples could do was to see what Jesus did and to hear what Jesus taught. Jesus does give some lessons in v. 17 and vv. 22-25. The passive disciples are contrasted with the power and authority of Jesus.

²⁹ The statement that “his disciples heard it (v.14)” prepares for Peter’s recognition that the tree had withered as a result of Jesus’ curse (Gundry 1993; Collins 2007).

3.3.2.1.3 The authorities

The authorities can be treated together as a single character, because the different groups which oppose Jesus share similar traits and carry on a continuing role in the plot in relationship to each other (Rhoads & Michie 1982:101). This is evident in the passage that this study focuses on. The chief priests and the scribes do not appear in the fig tree story, but they do appear in the story of the cleansing of the temple. Verse 18 states “and when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.” The chief priests and the scribes are the authorities and leaders of Israel, but they are impotent; they just hear what Jesus teaches and says; they want to kill Jesus but they are unable to do so.

At this point, Gundry (1993:641) argues that “by attaching ‘all’ to ‘the crowd’ and putting the phrase before its verb (whereas a subject normally follows its verb in this gospel), Mark displays the effect of Jesus' didactic authority at its highest power (so also 2:13;4:1; 9:15).” Gundry (1993:641) further argues that:

And so we have reached Mark's main point: the awe-inspiring power of Jesus' teaching, backed up as it is by his strong actions. He strikes fear even in the hearts of the hierarchs who are trying to destroy him. In fact, they are trying to destroy him *because* they fear him, *because* he has a powerful hold on the crowd.

In agreement with Gundry, the researcher understands the powerlessness of the chief priests and the scribes as stressing the authority and power of Jesus and in so doing, strengthening his character.

3.3.3 Events

No story can exist without events. Events include speech, thoughts, or feelings and perceptions, as well as action. However, not all events in a story are of equal importance. “Some events, called *kernels*, are so essential that they could not possibly be removed without destroying the logic of the narrative. Others, called *satellites*, could conceivably be deleted without disturbing the basic plot” (Powell 1990:36). Biblical scholars, however, have not made much use of this concept of kernels and satellites, because it is difficult to decide what in the stories are kernels and what are satellites.

It is also important to discern elements of causality that link events to each other in order to understand the plot of a narrative (Powell 1990:40). The causality of events can be divided into three categories; possibility, probability, and contingency. To accomplish the purpose of this study, it is crucial to recognize causality, namely the relation between the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of temple. Powell (1990:40-41) notes:

These insights regarding the principle of causation have significance for a literary reading of our Gospels. All four Gospels have plots that are basically *episodic*. The stories consist of brief incidents or episodes that are reported one right after another. In many cases, these episodes may be understood and appreciated apart from the rest of the narrative. Nevertheless, a literary reading will expect to find causal links between them, links that may be explicitly stated or simply implied.

3.3.3.1 Events of Mark 11:12-25

It is difficult to examine all the details of every event in Mark 11:12-25 as a result of the limited scope of this thesis. Two aspects in regards to the events in this pericope are, however, important for this study. One is the extent to which the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple are related. The other is that the reader or audience needs

to keep both Jesus' doings and sayings in balance with each other.

Firstly, with regards to the causality of the two stories, the point that the fig tree in the Old Testament generally represents Israel, but not the temple, is important. Taking the six passages that are regarded by Telford as the Old Testament background for this understanding, Gundry (1993:672-673) argues that "even with respect to Israel (if one allows that the temple stands for Israel), the use of figs and fig trees does not correspond very closely to Mark's story." Fruit or figs could represent religious fruitlessness. This point can become an important one in the connection between the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple. However, as already mentioned previously, Mark carefully avoids using the term, fruit or figs, by only saying "he would find anything on it" and "nothing but leaves." Mark does thus not emphasize that the tree is a fig tree, and by so doing, the connotation of fig trees with Israel. Nor does his general reference make any explicit link between the tree and the temple.

Secondly, Mark 11:12-25 includes both the deeds and the sayings of Jesus. Most scholars who believe that the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing the temple are signs of the destruction of the temple tend to ignore the sayings of Jesus in Mark 11:17, 22-25. So, in relation to 22-25, Gundry (1993:676-677) argues:

To the credit of W. R. Telford (*Barren Temple* 49-59), he recognizes the seriousness of the problem posed by these verses, viz., that they make the cursing and withering of the fig tree teach the power of faith rather than symbolizing the destruction of the temple. He labors desperately to turn back this lesson of faith. The very desperation of his labor exposes the weakness of the symbolic interpretation if the attempt at turning back fails.

In relation to Telford's view, Dowd (1988:4) also argues:

That 11:24-25 comes from the hand of a later redactor and that 11:23 originally referred not to the power of faith but to the destruction of the temple ("this

mountain” is the temple mount)³⁰. Therefore verses 24 and 25 need not be interpreted as part of the text of Mark. Of course, this position is completely lacking in textual evidence.

One could ask if the cursing of the fig tree (vv. 12-14) and Jesus' lessons (vv. 22-25) are in harmony with each other. However, Wuest (1950:224) points out that “the answer is remarkable; the Lord does not explain the lesson to be learned from the fate of the tree, but deals with a matter of more immediate importance to the Twelve, the lesson to be learnt from the prompt fulfillment of His prayer.” Jesus' answer in Mark 11:22-25 gives lessons on faith, prayer and forgiveness. Therefore, the researcher argues that if we consider the whole narrative and Jesus' words and deeds, a symbolic meaning thereof, referring to the destruction of the temple, becomes unlikely.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, a narrative analysis was done of the settings, characters, and events of Mark 11:12-25.

In regards to the spatial and temporal settings, the researcher examined the events, which are depicted in Mark 11 as naturally connected in time and space. This connectedness, it is argued, does not occur in other intercalations in Mark. Shepherd (1991) offers six passages commonly accepted as illustrating intercalation, i.e. Mark 3:20-35; 5:21-43; 6:7-32; 11:12-25; 14:1-11; and 14:53-72. These six intercalation examples were compared to Mark 11:12-25 and it became clear that it was different from the other intercalations in relation to temporal and spatial aspects. In the other examples there are nearly no terms regarding time and space. Even though there are some clues as to time and space in the

³⁰ Some scholars argue that “this mountain” in v. 23 refers to Temple Mount. For example, Marcus (2009:794) argue that “although the primary purpose of this assurance is to emphasize the power of faith, there may be a sidelong glance here at the destruction of the sanctuary, since “this mountain” can be a term for the Temple Mount.” However, “this mountain” in v. 23 more likely refers to the Mount of Olives than to the temple mount (Gundry 1993:678). See Gundry (1993:677-679), and also Dowd (1988:72-75), against identifying “this mountain” with the temple mount.

other passages, they do not give enough information in about how the respective inner and the outer stories are related. This is important as it most probably means that the author of the Mark did not arrange the two stories in Mark 11:12-25 as a deliberate intercalation in order to give it a symbolic meaning.

In terms of the characters depicted, some scholars argue that the Jesus who curses the fig tree in Mark 11:12-25 does not fit how his character is depicted in the rest of the Gospel of Mark, so they assume that what Jesus is doing has to have a symbolic meaning. However, the researcher argues that the cursing of the fig tree is an appropriate action for Jesus. Jesus does not hope to find figs, but buds on the tree. The cursing of the fig tree thus reveals the authority of Jesus, as does the cleansing of the temple. Not only does the passiveness of the disciples highlight the authority of Jesus, but also the powerlessness of the chief priests and the scribes.

The events depicted in Mark 11:12-25 include not only Jesus cursing the fig tree and cleansing the temple, but also Jesus' teaching on faith, prayer and forgiveness. Scholars who argue for a prophecy of the destruction of the temple tend to ignore Jesus' teachings. They argue that Mark 11:20-25 - the lessons of faith, prayer and forgiveness - are secondary or redactional. Narrative analysis, however, sees the Gospel as a sustained narrative. Therefore, if the reader is attentive to both Jesus' deeds and his teaching, they would understand that Mark 11:12-25 does not give a symbolic meaning, namely a prophecy of the destruction of the temple.

Gundry (1993:675) pointed out that "at the least we would expect a pronouncement of judgment, as in 13:1-2, 14-20. Without a pronouncement of judgment, stopping the traffic looks reformative." Mark includes the pronouncement of judgment in 13:1-2, 14-20. Jesus clearly proclaims "do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down" (13:2). Therefore, Jesus does not need to act like in Mark 11:12-25 in order to prophesize about the destruction of the temple. The implied author or hearer also does not need to arrange both stories to give them a symbolic meaning. In other words, Mark 11:12-25 does not constitute an intercalation.

Chapter 4

The oral aspect of the Gospel of Mark

4.1 Introduction

In the foregoing chapter, the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple was studied through narrative analysis by focusing on the settings, the characters and the events depicted therein. Even though many scholars interpret this passage as having a symbolic meaning, that is, the prophecy of the destruction of the temple, in light of the narrative analysis undertaken, it was argued that it is difficult to ascribe a symbolic meaning to the text. Instead, as the entire story of Mark shows, it rather depicts the authority and power of Jesus and gives a lesson on faith, prayer, and forgiveness.

In this chapter, the oral aspect of the passage will be examined in order to interpret Mark 11:12-25 properly. According to Dewey (1989:32), scholars such as Walter Ong and Eric Havelock have developed an understanding of the differences in oral and written compositions. Utilizing their work, Dewey offers some characteristics of oral narratives, which can help us to understand the Gospel of Mark. Therefore, this research will identify some characteristics that Dewey identifies, and then examine how these can help the interpretation of the relevant passages. Recently emerging related methods, as well as the oral setting of the first century will also be studied.

4.2 Oral criticism as method

Before oral criticism can be utilized in this chapter, it is important to explain what is meant

by orality.³¹ The oral tradition of a text can be studied as part of a form critical study.³² There are, however, also other approaches to orality and therefore orality critics and the recently emerging methodology known as performance criticism have also to be considered, as they all facilitate the understanding of the oral aspect of Mark.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the reason for the interest in orality in terms of the use of intercalations is because of Collins' suggestion in this regard. Collins (2007:524-525) states that "modern literary critics should be cautious of exaggerating the degree to which the intercalated stories are intended to interpret one another." Collins (2007:524) also suggests that "recent studies of orality have placed the whole question of intercalation in a new light." This statement means that it is important to take note of studies of orality in order to interpret Mark 11:12-25 properly.

In his article *Orality and the Gospels: A Survey of Recent Research*³³, Iverson (2009:71) states that "in the last thirty years there have been significant developments in the application of orality studies to the Gospels." According to Iverson (2009:71-72), "Jesus, the disciples and his early followers lived in a milieu that was largely illiterate (Harris 1989; Bar-Ilan 1992; Hezser 2001), and though literary texts were important in the culture of late Western antiquity, the primary means of communication was through the spoken word." Achtemeier (1990:3) points out in regard to the earliest Christian community in its relationship to its immediate cultural environs:

There is one aspect of that environment, however, which has been neglected in

³¹According to Rodríguez (2009:152) "Unfortunately, even as so-called Orality studies have problematized many of the assumptions underlying print-based, literary perspectives of biblical texts, they have essentialized other concepts, such as 'orality', 'oral tradition', 'oral culture' and so on."

³² According to Iverson (2009:77-78), "Kelber offered a penetrating critique of the transmission models espoused by Rudolf Bultmann (1963) and Birger Gerhardsson (1961), two scholars whose influential and opposing views had shaped the discussion of oral traditions in NT studies. Kelber's critical assessment of the form-critical approach focused on Bultmann's failure to account for the dynamics of orality and its relationship to written modes of communication." Dewey (1989:44) argues that "the form-critical assumption that there was no story of Jesus prior to the written Gospels, only individual stories about Jesus, also needs to be reconsidered in the light of our growing knowledge of oral narrative."

³³ This article provides "an overview of the field through a survey of its leading proponents, including Werner Kelber, Joanna Dewey, Paul Achtemeier, Pieter Botha, Richard Horsley and Jonathan Draper, Kenneth Bailey, James Dunn, Richard Bauckham, David Rhoads and Whitney Shiner" (Iverson 2009:71).

NT research. That aspect centers on the fact that we have in the culture of late Western antiquity a culture of high residual orality which nevertheless communicated significantly by means of literary creations.

It is this relationship between orality and literary creations that is of the utmost importance as this is not a fixed relationship, but one that develops over time. In this regard Bryan (1993:67) refers to Ong's four stages of the psycho-cultural development in human societies:³⁴

1. Primary oral culture, which is largely or completely innocent of reading and writing;
2. Literate culture in the manuscript stage, for example, from ancient Greece through medieval Europe; this culture is literate in that it uses phonetic alphabetic writing;
3. Literate culture in the print stage;
4. Secondary oral culture,³⁵ springing from use of electronic media, but rooted in literacy.

It is during the time of stages 1 and 2 in this sequence that Jesus lived and the Gospels were written. The present era is significantly different to this time. According to Ong (2002:2) contemporary readers of books are so literate that it is very difficult for us to conceive of an oral universe of communication or thought except as a variant of a literate universe. Therefore, a clear understanding of the oral circumstances of the first century setting is necessary in order to interpret the New Testament properly. As Rhoads (2010:21) explains, orality critics therefore:

Seek to understand from oral cultures, ancient and modern, the ethos of orality,

³⁴ According to Robbins (2006:127), "it is helpful, as a heuristic starting point, to distinguish between seven different kinds of speaking, reading, and writing cultures: (1) oral culture, (2) scribal culture, (3) rhetorical culture, (4) reading culture, (5) literary culture, (6) print culture, and (7) hypertext culture."

³⁵ According to Ong (2002:11), "it is 'primary' by contrast with the 'secondary orality' of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print."

the relation of writing to culture, the responsibilities and practices of tradents, the dynamics of social memory, the power dimensions of oral communication, and the gender dimensions of orality.

According to Rhoads (2010:5), scholars of the Gospels and Pauline writings have begun to talk about hearers rather than readers and to identify oral features of the narratives and the letters. In terms of the Gospels, Dewey (1989:33) has stated that the Gospel of Mark as a whole – not just its individual episodes – shows the legacy of orality. Indeed its methods of composition are primarily oral ones. Dewey's argument is crucial for this chapter. The characteristics of oral narrative that Dewey offers will therefore be dealt with, and then it will be applied to the passage to be interpreted.

With regards to studies in orality, mention should also be made of performance criticism,³⁶ a relatively recent emerging methodology in NT research. Although performance criticism is not the methodology chosen for the current research, it does shed some light on how to examine the passage in terms of the implications of orality studied in Mark. Boomershine (2010:283) emphasizes the importance of performance criticism by stating that it is a cornerstone of a new paradigm for the interpretation of the Bible in its original context and in the context of the twenty-first century.

In his article titled "*Performance Criticism*", David Rhoads (2010:1) argues for the centrality of performance in the life of the early church. Hearon (2011:211) also claims:

A growing number of scholars have argued that the writings of the New Testament are remnants of oral events. Some of the texts represent transcripts of oral performances, while others were written or dictated for performance. Recognition of the oral nature of the written text changes everything. It means that, as interpreters, we can no longer continue to focus exclusively on the

³⁶ Rhoads (2010:5) defines "performance" in the following manner: "I am defining 'performance' in the broadest sense here as any oral telling/retelling of a brief or lengthy tradition in a formal or informal context by trained or untrained performers – on the assumption that every telling is a lively recounting of that tradition."

words written on the page. We also need to discover what can be learned from seeing and hearing the text in performance.

However, it is important to mention the limitations of such an approach as well³⁷. Kelber (1983:44) states that the most serious problem concerns the transportation of language from one medium into another as what used to be spoken words are now only accessible to us in the written medium. What were events have become records of events. This means that once-living words have been silenced and that their actual speaking contexts are now irretrievably lost. Some oral forms may also have become textualized beyond recognition.

4.3 For the Hearer, not the Reader

In his *The Social sciences and New Testament interpretation*, Rohrbaugh (1996:1) argues that cross-cultural reading of the Bible is not a matter of choice since the Bible is a Mediterranean document written for Mediterranean readers, it presumes the cultural resources and worldview available to a reader socialized in the Mediterranean world. This underlines the necessity of cross-cultural reading and shows how different the present time is from the time in which the Bible was written. One important difference that needs to be taken into consideration is the difference in literacy rates between the first century and our present one.

Beavis (1989:21) argues that “since the evangelist was literate, we can assume that he was educated in a Graeco-Roman school. His reader/audience would thus have brought certain skills and interests to the composition and reading of the text which can be illumined by data on education in the Roman empire.”³⁸ In this regard, Rohrbaugh (1993:382) points out that “it is not necessary that the social level of the audience match

³⁷ Hearon (2006:20) argues that “although our written remains underline the close relationship between oral and written text, they also point to the complexity of the relationship between the two, reminding us that at some points they must be viewed as separate and distinct.”

³⁸ According to Horsley (2011:221), “contrary to older assumptions about ‘the Jews’ being a ‘people of the book’, the literacy rate in Judea and Galilee was far less, perhaps less than 10% or 5%.”

that of the author, especially since Mark's Gospel was almost certainly written to be read aloud or recited from memory.” Horsely (2001:53) also points out that Modern Westerners have simply assumed the existence of books and reading, particularly in educational circles. Modern scholars who devote their lives to study of “the Classics” and Scripture simply assume the existence of print culture. They assume that these works were composed in writing, and that ancient Greeks, Jew, and Christians could read them. Outside of a few aristocrats and scribes in ancient Greece, Rome, and Israel, however, virtually no one could read and write or even own copies of these works.

Kelber (1983:17) agrees that in general there was a low level of literacy and that the ability to read and write remained confined to a minority of people until the nineteenth century. Shiner (2003:11) asserts that most people in the Greco-Roman world were illiterate and that estimates of literacy among Jews in Israel usually range as low as 3 percent of the population. According to Boomershine (2011:120) current estimates are that the rates of literacy in urban areas in the first century were somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of the population, with significantly lower rates in rural areas. The overwhelming majority of people could not read. This implies that the ancient people, including the Markan community, were probably hearers, and not readers.

In addition, we need to take into consideration and understand how difficult it was to read ancient texts. Horsely (2001:56) points out that since no spaces were left between words on the scrolls, it was very difficult to follow texts with the eyes, let alone to locate particular passages. Shiner (2003:12) adds that the entire text was usually written in capital letters with little or no punctuation. Words were not separated by spaces and the letters of the text ran together in unbroken lines. Divisions between lines of text were determined by the length of the line, and words were divided at arbitrary points when the scribe ran out of room. Word divisions also did not necessarily correspond with syllables and no hyphens were used to mark words divided between different lines.

Through these characteristics of ancient writing, it can be seen that the ordinary person had a difficult task in reading ancient texts. This also implies that it was necessary to receive some sort of professional education in reading and writing. However, education

was limited in the first century. According to Rhoads (2010:5), “education that involved reading and writing was available almost exclusively to elites.” Davis (1999:24) also states that literacy simply was not necessary, even for cultural success. The society as a whole was still basically oral, and its traditional education provided the essentials for social life. Furthermore, Shiner (2003:13) states that “books were handwritten on scrolls and were much more expensive than books today.” Thus, it was difficult to have a personal copy of the Scriptures. Horsley (2001:58) points out that because scrolls were so costly, and ordinarily in the custody of priests and scribes, it is unlikely that very many Judean or Galilean village assemblies (*synagogai*) at the time of Jesus possessed Torah scrolls.

What conclusion can these points lead to? Dewey (1994:147-148) summarizes the differences between the ancient hearers and today's readers as follows :

All of us have employed close reading of the printed text in our analyses. We have had access to the Markan text in ways that were impossible for ancient audiences. Modern readers can stop and reflect on the text at any point; ancient hearers could not. We can reread and check back; they could not. We read the text silently and alone; they heard it spoken in community.

In this way, the understanding of the ancient hearers, unlike the modern reader, leads to the reader having different views of interpreting the Bible. Horsley (2001:55) also argues that if the vast majority of people in the Roman empire were illiterate we must rethink the relationship between the Gospel of Mark and its audience. We must try to study the New Testament in light of the oral environment of the first century. Rhoads (2010:1) points out that while scholars have studied the writings of the New Testament by reading them silently and in private they ought to be treated as remnants of *oral events*. That is, we need to study the writings of the New Testament as (trans)scripts of performances in an oral culture.

One of the keys to understanding the Gospel of Mark correctly is thus to accept that its intended audience was hearers, and not readers. Thus, Mark 11:12-25 needs to be

understood from the ancient hearer's point of view.

4.4 Mark's oral legacy

In the conclusion of his book, Brayn (1993:152) asks whether Mark was written to be read aloud.³⁹ He answers his question by claiming that Mark was designed for oral transmission – and for transmission as a continuous whole – rather than for private study or silent reading. Rhoads (2010:9) also argues that “the early Christian writings that have survived are to be seen, then, in the larger context of this oral ethos. Many scholars think that the Gospel of Mark was composed orally and then written down on some occasion in its performance life.”

According to Horsley (2006:viii), Werner Kelber is typically regarded as the first to recognize that the Gospels were composed and received in a world dominated by oral communication. Iverson (2009:77) remarks that “while Kelber was not the first to observe that an oral tradition lay behind the text (Culley 1986), he was the first to champion the development of an oral hermeneutic.” In this regard, Dewey (1989:32) points out that:

Kelber argued persuasively for the significance of the shift from oral to written media for early Christianity, stressing the radical discontinuity between the two media⁴⁰. Kelber sees in the Gospel of Mark the disruption of the oral synthesis, a new textuality arising out of the debris of deconstructed orality⁴¹.

³⁹ According to Hooker (2011:166), “the fact that his Gospel was designed to be heard has affected Mark's manner of writing: repetitions and summaries remind listeners of what has already taken place and help them to understand where the story is going, while the breathless style-so often criticized by literary scholars-carries us along in its enthusiasm.”

⁴⁰ Duling (2011:5) mentions that “although Kelber's innovative work on oral tradition was appreciated, it also produced strong responses. A prominent criticism of his work was that he had created an unjustified ‘great divide’ between oral and written cultures. David Balch countered with William Graham's study of world scriptures, showing that scriptural authority remained inescapably oral hundreds of years after the introduction of writing (1991; cf. Graham 1987; see also Goody 1987).” According to Shiner (2006:147), “while Kelber had stressed the differences between oral and written media, his later writings have explored the complex interrelationship between the two in rhetorical cultures such as that found in the Roman Empire during New Testament times.”

⁴¹ According to Draper (2006:45), Kelber “challenged the textual bias of western scholarship in assuming

However, Dewey (1989:33) argues that the Gospel of Mark *as a whole*—not just its individual episodes—shows the legacy of orality. Its methods of composition are primarily oral ones according to her. Moreover, in another article, although Dewey (1991:235) states that “I am also not arguing the Gospel of Mark was composed orally”, she claims:

It may have been, but there also seem to be indications of writing. I am arguing, however, that **it was still very close to oral composition, and that it was certainly composed with the needs of a listening audience in mind.** Therefore, we need to pay more attention to oral hermeneutics in studying the Gospel⁴² (emphasis I Ok).

The researcher is not convinced that the Gospel of Mark was composed orally. As with Dewey’s previous statement, the researcher however wants to emphasize that consideration should also be given to orality features when interpreting the Gospel of Mark. In this regard, Horsley (2001:61-62) points out:

It is relatively less important to know whether the story was composed (out of oral traditions) in performance, dictation, or in writing. At some point it was written down, becoming an oral-derived text. It is most important to recognize that, given the close relationship between text and performance in the ancient world, Mark was performed and heard in communities of people. Mark was thus a “text” that was recited repeatedly even after it was written down in one or more copies.

Watson (2010:116) states that “in general, written texts were used to facilitate oral communication, and they often bore certain characteristics of oral expression. Thus, they

a smooth, linear process of development from oral performance to written text.”

⁴² In Jaffe’s (2001) opinion, “precisely because texts were composed under the assumption that they would be read in the setting of oral performance, their compositional styles drew deeply upon habits of speech and rhetorical traditions that had their living matrix in oral communication.”

are called “oral-derived-text.” Watson (2010:117) argues that “Mark’s Gospel bears some of the distinctive marks of oral expression. In other words, it is an oral derived text.” Dewey (1989:42) also states: “The fact that the Gospel of Mark fits oral narrative characteristics argues that it was composed for a listening, not a reading, audience.” Therefore, we have to take “the dynamics of orality much more seriously in interpreting the Gospel of Mark” (Dewey 1989:42).

4.5 Memory and intercalation

In his article *Memory, collective memory, orality and the gospels*, Duling (2011:1) explores “individual, social and cultural memory and their importance for the gospels, especially gospel tradition.” Duling (2011:1) states:

A specialised area of research is ‘collective memory’, which is the notion that people remember together with other people and that memory is constructed in, by and for a social group. Collective memory in relation to smaller groups is sometimes called ‘social memory’, whereas, in relation to whole cultures, it tends to be called ‘cultural memory’. Both types of collective memory include ‘memory sites’ such as works of art, ritual acts, symbols, celebrations, memorials, libraries, writings and much more, all of which reinforce the collective identity of a people. There are also specialists, or ‘memory men’, who preserve collective memories and specialised acts of commemoration. The amount of disparate research on collective memory is rapidly increasing.

In orality, mnemonic function is very important. According to Kirk (2011:829), in cultural environments in which orality predominates, it is a matter of necessity that the normative resources of the community be retained in and transmitted in the medium of memory. Tradition, therefore, may be understood as a collocation of mnemonic strategies that circumvent the natural limitations of human memory while exploiting its remarkable

strengths.”⁴³ Rhoads (2010:6) states that “to facilitate the social memory, it is important to create powerful speech that is memorable – resulting commonly in such forms of speech as proverbs, stories, repetitions, alliterations, contrasts, epithets, and formulas.” Dewey (1989:36) also states that “for oral remembering, episodes must be visual, that is, pictured in the mind’s eye.”

Kelber argues that oral composition is rather memorable than historically accurate as follows (1983:71):

What is summoned for transmission is fashioned for mnemonic purposes and selected for immediate relevancy, not primarily for historical reasons. The studied simplicity of stories is designed to meet the needs of oral expediency and social identification more than historical accuracy. In sum, orality’s principal concern is not to preserve historical actuality, but to shape and break it into memorable, applicable speech.

Rhoads (2010:8) offers some features to enhance memory and claims:

So, the transmission and reception of the text did not go primarily from manuscript to manuscript but from audience reception to audience reception. Again, oral compositions facilitated this process of reception and transmission by including features that **enhanced memory. They were episodic, redundant (with variation), additive, aggregative, genre-driven, with parallels and contrasts, chiasmic patterns, plot markers, mnemonic hook words, and featuring memorable stories, proverbial sayings, and vivid analogies** (emphasis I Ok).

Collins (2007:524) highlights that “since Mark was written to be read aloud by a single

⁴³ According to Iverson (2009:74), “Parry and Lord had shown that the Homeric poems made wide use of formulaic phrases, a practice not valued in overwhelmingly literate cultures, but one in which, Havelock suggests, was vital to oral culture where knowledge acquisition and retention were dependent upon frequent recitation and mnemonic thought patterns.”

reader to a gathered group, the purpose of aiding the listener is likely to be the intention of the author.” The feature of oral composition that Mark has is closely related to mnemonic purposes and the effect of aiding the listener.

In light of this, the researcher suggests that there is a greater need for the study of intercalation. In chapter 2, the various understandings of few scholars regarding intercalation was offered. Scholars who write about intercalation tend to give the assurance that intercalation is a literary tool that Mark used. Although it is not intended to underestimate Mark as a narrative writer and the literary tools he uses in his narrative, it is clear that more research needs to be done about ‘intercalation’ in light of the oral composition of the Gospel of Mark. In this regard, there are some statements that have to be mentioned. According to Achtemeier (1990:21), “Kelber also notes that such intercalation is more likely to belong to the oral nature of the material than to anything like manipulation of the written text in the form of ‘interpolations’ (*The Oral and the Written Gospel*, 67).” Achtemeier (1990:21) argues:

Further narrative constructions, long recognized, can now be seen in light of the aid they rendered the listener in understanding the material being heard. The Marcan technique of intercalating stories is a way of allowing one story to function as an *inclusion* for a second, thus aiding the listener in determining when both stories have concluded.

Dewey (1989:39) also states:

Scholars have been noticing patterns—or acoustic responses—in Mark for some time now. The Marcan sandwiches are a form of ring composition. Scholars have suggested more elaborate concentric or parallel rhythms for several sections of Mark, among them 1:16-45; 2:1—3:6; 4:1-34; 8:27—9:13; 12:1-40; 13:56-37. (It should be noted that these sections are relatively brief, covering five or six pericopes, a length during which an oral performer can easily manipulate both structural and verbal parallels. Mark, even in writing, is still conforming to the restrictions on oral composition.)

Horsley (2001:72) also understands Markan “sandwiches” as a technique used in an oral narrative, which aid the performer’s memory and audience’s hearing. He (2001:72) argues:

Within the various sections of the Gospel are yet other techniques of oral narrative that aid the performer’s memory and audience’s hearing. The already long-acknowledged Markan “sandwiches” juxtapose two episodes, one framed within the other. The raising back to life of Jairus’s “twelve-year-old” daughter frames the healing of the woman who had been hemorrhaging for “twelve” years (5:21-43). The cursing of the fig tree frames the demonstration in the Temple (11:12-25). And Peter’s denial of Jesus (15:54, 66-72) is juxtaposed with Jesus’ trial before the Jerusalem high-priestly court (15:52, 55-65).

These quotations offer some clues for understanding intercalation in the light of the oral composition of the Gospel of Mark.

4.6 The implication of orality study from Dewey

In his article titled *The Gospel of Mark as an oral-aural event: implications for interpretation*, largely depending on Walter Ong⁴⁴ and Eric Havelock⁴⁵’s works, Dewey (1994:148-149) argues:

⁴⁴ In his book *Orality and Literacy*, Ong offers nine characteristics of oral composition: Additive rather than subordinative; aggregative rather than analytic; redundant or ‘copious’; conservative or traditionalist; Close to the human lifeworld; Agonistically toned; Empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced; homeostatic; situational rather than abstract. “These characteristics, Ong argued—once plunged to the depths of literacy—are forever altered by the dramatic restructuring of the human mind for ‘more than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness’ (1982: 78)” (Iverson 2009:76).

⁴⁵ Iverson (2009:75) states that “Havelock’s work is important for orality studies because he is able to describe the effects of writing, as well as the distinct characteristics of the oral mindset.” According to Dewey (1989:34): “In *Preface to Plato* Havelock argues persuasively that Plato’s attack on poetry or mimesis in the *Republic* is in fact an attack on the whole oral mind-set still pervasive in fourth-century Athens. According to Havelock, what Plato rejects about mimesis is what is characteristic of oral media. So one way to approach the issue of oral structuring techniques in Mark is to compare the Gospel to Plato’s understanding of mimesis. If Mark shares the characteristics of mimesis rejected by Plato, then Mark too shares characteristics of oral media.”

Oral narratives, including written narratives performed orally for nonliterate audiences, tend to differ in characteristic ways from print narratives written for silent individual reading. Walter Ong summarizes these characteristics as follows: content is combined in additive rather than subordinating relationships; the structure is aggregative rather than analytic or linear; the content is also repetitious or ‘copious’, close to the human world, agonistically toned, and empathetic and participatory rather objectively distanced (Ong 1982: 37-49). Recognition of some of these characteristics, particularly the additive and aggregative structures and the participatory character, **helps us to interpret various aspects of Mark that have puzzled and divided scholars and literary critics of the Gospel** (emphasis I Ok).

If Dewey’s statement is correct, these characteristics could help to interpret the passage concerned. It is crucial, therefore, to carefully observe what Dewey describes as some of the characteristics of the oral narratives that may be found in Mark.

4.6.1 Additive and aggregative composition

Firstly, Dewey states that additive and aggregative compositional features characterize oral narratives. To show a familiar instance of additive oral style, Ong (2002:37) compares Genesis 1:1-5 in the Douay Version (1610) with the New American Bible (1970). While there are nine introductory “ands” in the Douay Version, the New American Version has only two “ands” and “each submerged in a compound sentence” (Ong 2002:37). Ong (2002:37) argues

The Douay renders the Hebrew *we* or *wa* (‘and’) simply as ‘and’. The New American renders it ‘and’, ‘when’, ‘then’, ‘thus’, or ‘while’, to provide a flow of narration with the analytic, reasoned subordination that characterizes writing (Chafe 1982) and that appears more natural in twentieth-century texts.

Dewey (1989:37) also affirms that “with our sensibilities formed in a print culture, we read analytic relationships into the additive oral narrative.” According to Dewey (1989:37), “the Marcan narrative is certainly a series of independent episodes joined by ‘and’.” Therefore, the question needs to be asked as to whether we should interpret the concerned passage using this tendency. This point needs to be tested as it is attempted to study the passage anew in light of the characteristic mentioned in the following. Dewey (1994:149) explains that this characteristic can be advantageous in attempting to understand Mark.

Awareness of these structural characteristics helps us to make sense of Mark, which, on the one hand, consists of independent, often repetitive, episodes loosely connected without the linear climactic plot development we are accustomed to from modern novels and short stories, and on the other, exhibits elaborate interweaving and development of themes.

4.6.2 Agonistic tone

Dewey (1994:150) states that “a second characteristic of oral-aural narrative that helps us to interpret Mark is its agonistic tone.” Ong (2002:43) argues that “many, if not all, oral or residually oral cultures strike literates as extraordinarily agonistic in their verbal performance and indeed in their lifestyle.” According to Rhoads (2010:6), “speech, particularly rhetorical speech, is often agonistic, because it regularly occurs in contexts in which there is an in-group and an out-group.”

How does the characteristic of an agonistic tone assist in interpreting Mark? Dewey believes that this characteristic can give a new interpretation about the negative portraits of the disciples in Mark. According to Dewey (1994:150), “modern scholars in general tend to take the negative portrait and the agonistic dialogue very seriously.” Weeden believes that Mark intentionally attacks the disciples. Weeden (1979:50-51) argues:

Mark is assiduously involved in a vendetta against the disciples. He is intent on totally discrediting them. He paints them as obtuse, obdurate, recalcitrant men who at first are unperceptive of Jesus' messiahship, then oppose its style and character, and finally totally reject it. As the coup de grace, Mark closes his Gospel without rehabilitating the disciples.

In review of Weeden's book, Robbins (Robbins 1972:418) estimates that "often the unfavorable role of the disciples in Mark has been noticed but understated. Weeden has attempted to explain it in the context of the entire narrative." However, Dewey (1994:151) asserts: "Yet it is doubtful that ancient listening audiences would have interpreted the Markan disciples so negatively."⁴⁶ Highlighting on oral hermeneutics, Dewey (1991:236) argues that "the negative portrayal of the disciples would probably have been taken much less seriously by a first-century listening audience than by modern scholars accustomed to printed texts." Therefore, it is possible to reach a better understanding of how first-century hearers heard the Gospel by studying Mark in light of oral hermeneutics (Dewey 1991:236).

4.6.3 Participatory character

Thirdly, Dewey (1994:151) highlights that "the implications of the participatory character of oral-aural performance and reception are particularly important for our understanding of Mark." According to Dewey (1994:151), "participation is at the heart of oral performance. Participation is not just on the part of an audience who responds to a fixed text but also on the part of the performer who constantly adapts his or her performance/text to the audience." Suggesting empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced as being part of an oral narrative's character, Ong (2002:45) states

⁴⁶ According to Brown (1997:156), "E. Best has argued persuasively that Mark's depiction of their failure was meant to function as a pastoral example to the recipients who had also encountered failure, rather than as a polemic against a false position."

“for an oral culture learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known (Havelock 1936, pp. 145-6), ‘getting with it’. Writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for ‘objectivity’, in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing.” Dewey (1994:152) argues:

Hearing the Gospel of Mark performed is the experience of becoming part of a world in which both miracles and persecution are real. The hearers enter a world in which the courage to move forward in following the Markan Jesus – in spite of and through human failure as experienced through the disciples – becomes a possibility, even a reality. The oral-aural story does not primarily convey historical information; it gives meaning and power to a way of life, to a cosmos becomes real in performance.

What is the contribution of the participatory character in understanding Mark? Dewey believes it can help us to understand the apparently unfinished ending of Mark and (1994:156) argues:

In the situation of oral performance, with its sequential or associative identification of the audience with the events of the story, the unresolved ending at 16.8 functioned as a summons to the audience to follow Jesus in the way of discipleship, enjoying healings and risking persecution, failing and succeeding ‘on the way’. The ending would call the audience to *continue* the story, expecting both successes and failures. The lack of closure helps to involve the hearer in the continuation of the story.

4.7 Oral characteristics in Mark 11:12-25

In the next few paragraphs, the researcher will attempt to apply these characteristics to Mark 11:12-25.

4.7.1 Additive and aggregative

It seems clear that the passage shows the additive character that Ong and Dewey asserted previously. If the passage is studied in Greek, the usage of “Καὶ” is seen as follows:

- 12 Καὶ τῇ ἐπαύριον ἐξελθόντων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ Βηθανίας ἐπείνασεν.
- 13 καὶ ἰδὼν συκὴν ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔχουσαν φύλλα ἦλθεν, εἰ ἄρα τι εὐρήσει ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐπ’ αὐτὴν οὐδὲν εὗρεν εἰ μὴ φύλλα· ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων.
- 14 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Μηκέτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἐκ σοῦ μηδεὶς καρπὸν φάγοι. καὶ ἤκουον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.
- 15 Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἤρξατο ἐκβάλλειν τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἀγοράζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, καὶ τὰς τραπέζας τῶν κολλυβιστῶν καὶ τὰς καθέδρας τῶν πωλούντων τὰς περιστερὰς κατέστρεψεν,
- 16 καὶ οὐκ ᾔφειεν ἵνα τις διενέγκῃ σκεῦος διὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ.
- 17 καὶ ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Οὐ γέγραπται ὅτι Ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποιήκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον ληστῶν.
- 18 καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ ἐζήτουν πῶς αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν· ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ αὐτόν, πᾶς γὰρ ὁ ὄχλος ἐξεπλήσσετο ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ.
- 19 Καὶ ὅταν ὀψὲ ἐγένετο, ἐξεπορεύοντο ἔξω τῆς πόλεως.
- 20 Καὶ παραπορευόμενοι πρῶτ’ εἶδον τὴν συκὴν ἐξηραμμένην ἐκ ῥιζῶν.
- 21 καὶ ἀναμνησθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ, Ῥαββί, ἴδε ἡ συκὴ ἣν κατηράσω ἐξήρანται.
- 22 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ.
- 23 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὃς ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ, Ἀρθητι καὶ βλήθητι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ μὴ διακριθῇ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ πιστεύῃ ὅτι ὃ λαλεῖ γίνεται, ἔσται αὐτῷ.
- 24 διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν, πάντα ὅσα προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε, πιστεύετε ὅτι ἐλάβετε, καὶ ἔσται ὑμῖν.
- 25 καὶ ὅταν στήκετε προσευχόμενοι, ἀφίετε εἴ τι ἔχετε κατὰ τινος, ἵνα καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἀφῇ ὑμῖν τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν.

Except for verse 23 and 24, not only does every verse begin with "Καὶ" but almost every

scene is similarly connected with "Καὶ". David L. Barr (2002:269-270) points out: "Mark's gospel consists of 106 (or so) pericopes, ranging in length from a single sentence to a couple paragraphs. Most are connected together with the simple conjunction and, probably indicating the originally oral nature of the composition."

According to Dewey (1994:149), "additive and aggregative composition results in non-linear plotting or, from our print perspective, lack of a climactic linear plot." In light of this characteristic, do those who believe in the prophecy of the destruction of the temple not interpret the passage as being part of a linear plot? Do they not then interpret the passage from the perspective of a print culture and thus exaggerate the meaning of the intercalation? Dewey (1989:37) argues that "with our sensibilities formed in a print culture, we read analytic relationships into the additive oral narrative." If the current passage is interpreted as referring to the destruction of the temple, are we adhering to what Dewey has said? Therefore, in the additive and aggregative features, it can be argued that the passage gives a simple meaning, as has already been identified through narrative criticism.

4.7.2 Agonistic tone

As mentioned in chapter 3, scholars who believe that the current passage has a symbolic meaning argue that Jesus' cursing of the fig tree is out of character for him. Evans (2001:151) estimates:

It is the only example we have in the Gospel tradition of Jesus performing a curse miracle (in contrast, see Luke 9:51-56, where Jesus specifically forbids taking destructive action). Such miracle stories may be found in the OT and in Acts (e.g., 2 Kgs 1:4, 10-14; 2:23-24; 5:27; Acts 5:1-11; 13:6-12). But the capricious nature of Jesus' action here seems out of character with his ministry as found in the Jesus tradition.

In a modern sense, it may appear as if Jesus cursing of the fig tree is out of character. However, in light of the agonistic tone of the oral aspect of Mark, it is a question whether Jesus' cursing of the fig tree without figs would not have been a natural thing to do for first century hearers? Although there could be variance in the scope of understanding, Mark's community was likely to understand more clearly than today's readers. In other words, Jesus' action in Mark 11:12-25 was probably accepted as part of their everyday life by first century hearers.

The agonistic tone that characterizes oral communication can give us clues to understanding Jesus' action in the temple. According to Marcus (2009:782), "it remains a question whether Jesus' Temple action symbolized the destruction of the Temple or simply pointed to abuse that cried out for rectification." In relating to this problem, mention needs to be made of E. P. Sanders. In his book, *Jesus and Judaism*, Sanders (1985:62-71) offers various interpretations concerning this problem, and then argues that Jesus' action in the temple symbolized its destruction. Sanders (1985:70) particularly highlights Jesus' action where he overturned some tables, and asserts "the assessment of 'overturning' as a self-evident symbol of destruction. Sanders (1985:70-71) asserts that "I take it that the action at the very least symbolized an attack, and note that 'attack' is not far from 'destruction'."

It seems that Sanders' argument begins with and largely depends on the understanding that Jesus' action in the temple is an 'attack'. Therefore, in order to determine the proper understanding of the passages being studied, it is crucial to see whether Jesus' action in the temple was a 'cleansing' or an 'attack'. For modern readers, it is not improbable that Jesus' action in the temple can be considered to be an attack, or at least an example of violent action. However, if the interpretation of the temple story is done in the light of an agonistic tone, a different view is perceived; that is, that the first century audience may have heard the story more smoothly or naturally in contrast to today's contemporary reader. According to this view, Jesus' action can be interpreted as a cleansing rather than as an attack. Thus, it can be argued that if the temple story is interpreted in light of an agonistic tone, Jesus' action in the temple is not an attack, neither stopping of the sacrificial activity nor the temple's permanent cessation. For this reason, it is difficult to

interpret the temple story in Mark as being a precursor of the destruction of the Temple.

4.7.3 Participatory character

In this section it will be asked if the participatory character of an oral culture can help to interpret the current passage. The participatory character highlights that oral narratives were written so that their hearers may participate or become part of the story, rather than for merely transmitting information. Dewey (1994:152) argues that “biblical scholars’ reading of the Gospel for the information it gives us about the historical Jesus or the Markan community reads against the Gospel’s genre of inciting participation in its story.” The question must therefore be asked if the interpretation of the destruction of the temple is not the result of reading both stories only for information. Should the passage not rather be read according to its participatory character? The participatory character demands of the readers and hearers of Mark 11:20-25 to pay attention when Jesus teaches on faith, prayer, and forgiveness (“Have faith in God” (v. 22), “whatever you ask for in prayer” (v. 24), “forgive” (v. 25)). The participatory character of the oral aspect of Mark invites its readers to be participants in faith, prayer and forgiveness.

In addition, performance criticism attempts to imagine the situation in which Mark’s community was hearing Mark 11:12-25.⁴⁷ Initially, the first century audience of Mark heard about Jesus cursing the fig tree and may have wondered why this was done. They subsequently heard of Jesus’ action in the Temple where he drove out the buyers and sellers overturned the tables of the money-changers and those who sold doves, and also where he refused anyone to be allowed to carry anything through the temple. After doing this, Jesus was teaching and said:

“Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?”

⁴⁷ As mentioned above, Hearon (2011:211) claims that “recognition of the oral nature of the written text changes everything. It means that, as interpreters, we can no longer continue to focus exclusively on the words written on the page. We also need to discover what can be learned from seeing and hearing the text in performance.”

But you have made it a den of robbers.” (v. 17)

Finally, they heard about the withered fig tree. Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered,” and Jesus answered them:

“Have faith in God.” (v. 22)

“Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.” (v. 23)

“So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (v. 24)

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.” (v. 25)

The question can thus be asked in regard to a performance or a recitation of the text; what Mark’s community heard and understood? Did they receive information concerning the destruction of the temple, or were they participants in Jesus’ lesson? Is it not probable that it is the latter? For this reason special attention needs to be given to Mark 11:20-25’s teaching on faith, prayer, and forgiveness as narrative criticism does. Therefore, it can be argued that Mark 11:12-25 is not to be primarily interpreted as a prophecy on the destruction of the temple.

Finally, two important implications of an oral narrative need to be considered. Firstly, Dewey (1989:36) states that “for oral remembering, episodes must be visual, that is, pictured in the mind’s eye.” Similarly, Mann (1986:440) states that “there is a vividness about the narrative which is lacking in the Lucan parable”, with many scholars agreeing that the cursing of the fig tree in Mark was vivid. Thus, this feature can be used as an example for understanding which sections of the focus passage has the characteristics of an oral narrative. Secondly, Dewey claims that the teaching embedded in the event has the characteristic of oral narrative. “It may be the difficulty of remembering sayings material apart from events” (Dewey 1989:35). Dewey (1989:35) specifically points out Mark 11:20-25 as an example of this, as he states that:

The embedding of teaching in event is characteristic of Mark. For example, unlike Matthew 6, with its general instructions on fasting and prayer, Mark includes such teaching only in the context of events, the dispute over why Jesus' disciples do not fast (Mark 2:18-20), and the episode of the discovery of the withered fig tree (11:20-25).

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, orality was firstly explained, as Collins has suggested that recent studies of orality can provide new insights into the functioning of intercalations in texts that were produced in predominantly oral cultures. Furthermore, although it is not the chosen methodology for the current research, the developing methodology of performance criticism was discussed, as it can provide a new perspective on the New Testament. This approach is important, given that it pays particular attention to the first century context, which was characterized as being dominated by oral communication. Rhoads (2010:5), for example, claims that “scholars seem to be in agreement that the first century Mediterranean world was basically comprised of oral cultures.”

In the modern era, readers are accustomed to reading a text personally and silently. The modern reader also has the convenience of easily reading and rereading a passage of Scripture in endeavoring to understand what a verse, passage or book says. As indicated, few people in first century could read. Horsley (2001:55) pointed out that “the vast majority of people the Galilean, Judean, and other villagers, were largely illiterate. One recent study places the literacy rate in Roman Palestine as low as 3 percent.” The Gospels and their message were thus rather heard than read by the vast majority of their original audience. This is important to keep in mind, as there is a huge difference between reading and hearing. In the words of Kelber (1983:67):

In reading a text, the eye can roam the pages, return to a passage, dwell on it,

and compare it with other passages. But the auditor is entitled to only one hearing. He or she cannot revert to spoken words and reflect on them. The reflective procedure is not given much of a chance in orality. The ear has to be attuned to live speech and must grasp it momentarily.

Furthermore, although “Kelber argued persuasively for the significance of the shift from oral to written media for early Christianity, stressing the radical discontinuity between the two media” (Dewey 1989:32), Dewey (1989:33) argues that “the Gospel of Mark *as a whole*—not just its individual episodes—shows the legacy of orality, indeed that its methods of composition are primarily oral ones.” Rhoads (2010:8) asserts that “we are now able to identify many oral features of extant written texts.” Depending largely on Ong’s work, Dewey offers some characteristics of the oral narrative in Mark. Dewey (1994:149) argues that these characteristics can help us to interpret various aspects of Mark properly. These are, rather than a linear plot, the additive and aggregative composition thereof, its agonistic tone and participatory character.

This study attempted to apply these characteristics to Mark 11:12-25. In regard to the additive and aggregative characteristics, Dewey (1989:37) argues that “with our sensibilities formed in a print culture, we read analytic relationships into the additive oral narrative.” The interpreter therefore needs to be cautious to not over analyze the stories of cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple.

With regards to the agonistic tone that characterize texts produced in an oral culture, Dewey’s (1994:151) argument that “the negative portrayal of the disciples may well have seemed to audiences merely part of a normal story” must also be taken into consideration. It may thus be that Jesus’ cursing of the tree and his action in the temple were normal agonistic stories for Mark’s audience. The initial audience may thus have had a different response to the stories, in contrast to how contemporary audiences respond to it.

As examined through narrative criticism in chapter 3, the second part of the cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:20-25) must not be ignored. The participatory character of Jesus’ lessons of faith, prayer, and forgiveness should be paid particular attention. In other words,

in light of participatory characteristics, current passages encourage hearers to practice what the texts said (have faith, pray, and forgive), rather than to give information, i.e. a prophecy of the destruction of the temple.

The characteristics of oral narrative in the passage have been discussed in the light of the work of Dewey, Ong and Havelock. According to Kelber (1983:71), “orality’s principal concern is not to preserve historical actuality, but to shape and break it into memorable, applicable speech.” In light of these orality features, it can be asked if the structure of the pericope does not rather have a mnemonic function than a theological one? It must be remembered that when Mark composed his narrative, his primary consideration was to communicate with his audience who would hear his story. Therefore, if we consider the intercalation in Mark 11 in the light of orality, its function is to aid the listener. It is primarily a mnemonic device. The warning of Dewey (1991:236) should thus be heeded when she writes that:

Although the first-century audience for Mark, with few exceptions, was not readers but hearers of Mark’s Gospel, we are readers. It is perfectly legitimate for us to approach the Gospel with all our sophisticated tools and theories of literary analysis, provided we remember that these are our interpretations, not first-century understandings of the Gospels.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In the context of Mark 11, most people, including the researcher, question Jesus' cursing of the fig tree out of season. The question that needed to be asked and answered is why Jesus cursed the fig tree. This question led to the investigation and analysis of the current passage in search for a reasonable answer. At first, it seems that the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple was an acceptable. However, this interpretation could not be adhered to, as an analysis of the pericope led to a deeper understanding of its meaning.

Scholars who argue for the prophecy of the destruction of the temple tend to depend largely on the role of intercalation to interpret Mark 11:12-25. Edwards (1989:216) argues that "J. Donahue is correct in regarding the purpose of Markan sandwiches as theological and not solely literary", and many scholars understand that intercalation in Mark functions as the mutual interpretation of inner and outer stories (Rhoads & Michie, Telford, France). However, there are three problems with understanding it as an intercalation. Firstly, not all scholars agree with the definition of intercalations; secondly, there is a question about exactly where it occurs in Mark (Shepherd 1991:3); and thirdly, intercalations can function differently from each other (Dewey 1980:22).

Thus, Mark 11:12-25 needs to be closely examined in order to discern its meaning. Moreover, in line with Collins' suggestion (2007:524) that recent studies of orality have placed the whole question of intercalation in a new light, it was necessary to consider what these studies contribute to the understanding of the text. Therefore, by paying attention to narrative criticism and the oral aspect of Mark, the researcher has examined Mark 11:11-12 and has come to the conclusion that Mark 11:12-25 is not a prophecy of the destruction of the temple. The function of the intercalation in Mark 11 should therefore be reconsidered. In this concluding chapter, the argument of the previous

chapters will be briefly summarized before coming to a final conclusion as to the meaning of Mark 11:12-25 and the intercalation contained therein.

5.2 Overview

Chapter 1 outlined the research problem of the study. The study began with Kirk's (2012:511) statement that "from a redaction-critical perspective, a majority of Markan scholars now agree that the symbolic intent of depicting the temple's destruction is established by the intercalation of the temple-clearing incident with the cursing of the fig tree." Thus, to interpret Mark 11:12-25 according to the manner Kirk describes a specific understanding of "intercalation" is crucial. The question was therefore asked if Mark 11:12-25 does in fact constitute an intercalation *with a theological purpose* or whether the purpose of the structure of the pericope is purely to serve as an aid to the listener?

In chapter 2, the foundation was laid to answer the research question "what is an appropriate understanding of Mark 11:12-25?" Firstly, a brief history of the various studies on the Gospel of Mark was offered as an introduction. For a long time, the Gospel of Mark was neglected by scholars because it was thought that Mark was an abridgment of Matthew. "In the nineteenth century a new consensus emerged that Mark is the earliest of the four canonical Gospels" (Collins 1992:vii). This leads scholars to conclude that it retold the real story of Jesus. Today, many scholars still accept the Two-Source hypothesis, namely that Matthew and Luke used Mark and Q, even though this theory cannot solve every Synoptic problem.

Secondly, an overview of the history of the scholarly interpretations of Mark 11:12-25 was given. Among various studies, Telford's book, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree*, was shown to be an important and influential contribution. Focusing on the redactional concerns in Mark, Telford (1980:238) concludes that "by sandwiching his story on either side of the Cleansing account, Mark indicates that he wishes the fate of the unfruitful tree to be seen as a proleptic sign prefiguring the destruction of the Temple

cultus.” Several scholars, such as Collins and Gundry, have however argued against Telford’s understanding. Telford (1980:49) himself recognized a serious weakness in his own argumentation in that “claiming that Mark’s story was intended to have a symbolic function, we are at once confronted with a serious objection. It has been frequently pointed out, with justice, that vv. 22-26 of the sequel do not appear to interpret the fig-tree story in a symbolic or allegorical light.”

Thirdly, a brief comparison of the similarities and differences of the stories depicted in Matthew and Mark was done. In Matthew, after the temple story (21:12-17), the fig story simply follows (21:18-22), while in Mark, the fig tree story is divided into two parts (11:12-14, 20-25) with the temple story inserted between them (11:15-19). This shows that while the stories in Matthew is depicted as occurring on the same day, the stories in Mark were spread over a two day period. It is clearly an important difference between Mark and Matthew. However, it is contended in this study that despite this difference, as well as others in the detail between Matthew and Mark, the meaning of the stories are essentially the same in the two Gospels. The basic storyline in both Matthew and Mark is the same and both include Jesus’ concluding teaching on faith and prayer. The important point is that both Matthew and Mark present Jesus’ teaching on faith and prayer as the lesson of the cursing of the fig tree. If both stories have the same message, the meaning of intercalation (which is used to change the meaning of the cursing of the fig tree to a reference to the destruction of the temple) in Mark needs to be reassessed.

Finally, a number of scholars’ understanding of the intercalation in Mark (and in general) was investigated. According to Downing (2000:105), “there have been a number of monographs and articles of late discussing “intercalation” in Mark’s writing.” Although Oyen (1992:951) states that “intercalation is generally considered part of Mark’s narrative art”, there are many different opinions about its function and role in Mark. Dobschütz “proposed that it served the purpose of filling up a gap of space or time within the main narrative” (Shepherd 1991:2). Kee (1977:56) explains that “the interpolation procedure serves in some cases to alter the tradition in order to make it more directly useful or acceptable to the community of Mark.” Wright (1985:222) claims that “the intercalations

work in the service of the plot of the Gospel to assist the unfolding of the identity of Jesus and to show a number of responses to him.” Donahue and Edwards argue that the purpose of the Markan sandwich is theological and not solely literary. Shepherd (1991:328) argues that the intercalation is “to produce a dramatized irony between key characters and their actions.” Telford (1980:48) highlights the mutual interpretation of the different stories to each other. These various understandings about the function of an intercalation thus do not give a fixed answer as to how it should be understood in Mark 11:12-25. The narrative of Mark itself thus needs to be examined in order to discern the meaning of the intercalation.

Therefore, in chapter 3, an attempt was made to study Mark 11:12-25 by undertaking a narrative analysis. Before the development of narrative criticism, the historical-critical methods such as form criticism and redaction criticism governed the study of the New Testament. While these methods do have, value they, like Hans Frei (1974) points out, fail to seriously consider the narrative character of the Gospels. According to Horsley (2006:vii), “in the 1970s, some interpreters began reading the Gospels as sustained narratives rather than continuing the standard focus on individual sayings and pericopes.” Many contemporary scholars agree that Mark is a narrative story, and this recognition of the narrative genre thereof allows for the use of narrative criticism as an appropriate method for its study.

The three focus areas of narrative analysis were dealt with in chapter 3; that is, the settings, the characters and the events in Mark 11. With regards to spatial and temporal settings, special attention was paid to the point in which each scene in Mark 11 is naturally connected in time and space. The question was asked if these connections do not show that the structure of Mark 11:12-25 is original, rather than redacted? According to Edwards (1989:196), “Mark sandwiches one passage into the middle of another with an intentional and discernible *theological purpose*.” In other words, their structure is a redacted one that reflects a theological purpose. However, as the stories are clearly connected in time and space, can it be that Mark 11:12-25 is not redacted and the Mark did not intend to arrange the two stories in Mark 11:12-25 as an intercalation? The natural progression of the narration of the different stories argues against seeing the creation of

an intercalation as the only way of understanding their structure.

Their structure is also not like those of other intercalations in Mark. To show this, six passages (Mark 3:20-35; 5:21-43; 6:7-32; 11:12-25; 14:1-11; and 14:53-72) commonly accepted as being intercalations were compared to Mark 11. The comparison revealed that Mark 11:12-25 differs from the other examples of intercalations in relation to temporal and spatial elements. In the other examples, there are nearly no terms regarding time and space, and even though there are some references to time and space in the other passages, they do not give enough information to reveal how the inner story and the outer story are related to each other in terms of time and space. In these intercalations the point is thus not how they relate to each other in time and space (and thus as part of a narrative progression), but rather on how they relate to each other on a symbolic level. However, each event in Mark 11:12-25 has a definite spatial and temporal setting. Therefore, it is argued that the narration of the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple, and the way these two stories are related to each other in the narratives presentation of space and time relate Mark's understanding of how these two episodes occurred and that they are not a deliberately created intercalation with a symbolic meaning.

One of the most difficult questions in our passage is related to the character of Jesus. Many scholars wonder why the depiction of Jesus in these stories does not fit His character as it is generally depicted by the Gospel writers. They therefore assume that what Jesus' is doing in this passage has to have a symbolic meaning. However, the researcher attempted to offer a reasonable interpretation of the conduct of Jesus in Mark 11 that is in line with Mark's general depiction of Jesus' character, as it was argued that Jesus did not hope to find figs, but buds. This meant that the cursing of the fig tree was not only an appropriate action for Jesus, but also demonstrated his absolute authority and power as it is depicted in the gospel of Mark.

According to narrative criticism, we have to read a text as a unified entity within the complete story of Mark. What we ignore about a passage or scene could thus be highly problematic. It is, therefore, important to note that Mark 11:12-25 also emphasizes the teaching ministry of Jesus as it not only refers to Jesus' cursing of the fig tree (v. 12-14)

and the cleansing of the temple (v. 15-19), but also his teaching on faith, prayer and forgiveness (vv. 20-25). Therefore, we should not overlook Jesus' lessons of faith, prayer, and forgiveness in the passage. Scholars, however, who argue for a prophecy of the destruction of the Temple as the meaning of the intercalation tend to disregard this point in order to strengthen their argument. It should also be noted that there is no textual evidence that Mark 11:20-25 is an interpolation (Dowd 1988:4). Therefore, if the interpreter of Mark 11:12-25 is attentive to both Jesus' actions and his teaching in this passage, they would understand that the passage does not give a symbolic reference to the destruction of the temple. It should also be noted that the fig tree in the Old Testament generally represents *Israel* and not the temple. The general reference to a fig tree by Mark does thus not mean that his readers would automatically link it with the temple.

Finally, it was emphasized that Mark refers to Jesus' pronouncement of Judgment over the temple in 13:1-2, 14-20. Here Jesus clearly proclaims "do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down" (13:2). Given that Jesus explicitly refers to the destruction of the temple, there is no clear need for him to give a *symbolic* pronouncement thereon. *Mark also does not link his description of Jesus' pronouncement of judgment over the temple with the cursing of the fig tree.* Therefore, it can be argued that Mark did not intend that the cursing of the fig tree be read with a symbolic meaning.

Chapter 3 concluded that Mark 11 does not function as an intercalation with a theological meaning. Therefore, as a response to the question asked in the research question of chapter 1, it can be argued that Mark 11:12-25 does not constitute an intercalation with a theological purpose (i.e. a symbolic prophecy of the destruction of the temple).

In chapter 4, the oral aspect of Mark for our topic was dealt with. Collins' suggestion (2007:524) that "recent studies of orality have placed the whole question of intercalation in a new light", encourages the necessity of studying the orality in Mark. Furthermore, a recent emerging methodology in New Testament research called "performance criticism" provides us with many new insights for interpreting texts produced in predominately oral cultures. Rhoads (2010:5) argues that "scholars seem to be in agreement that the first

century Mediterranean world was basically comprised of oral cultures.” Furthermore, Dewey (1989:33) argues that “the Gospel of Mark as a whole – not just its individual episodes – shows the legacy of orality, indeed that its methods of composition are primarily oral ones.”

Firstly, it was shown that Mark’s community probably was governed by oral communication and was not reader-oriented but hearer-oriented. Watson (2010:116) points out that “it is crucial to keep in mind that Mark’s Gospel is a narrative written in a culture in which most people could not read, or at least not very well, and important ideas were communicated normally through oral, rather than written, expression.” Horsley (2001:55) pointed out “the vast majority of people, the Galilean, Judean, and other villagers, were largely illiterate. One recent study places the literacy rate in Roman Palestine as low as 3 percent.” These insights give the modern reader a better understanding of how to interpret the New Testament, as it makes clear that the Gospel stories were heard and not read by the majority of their audiences. The question thus arises if ancient hearers understood the fig tree and the temple story in the same way as modern readers living in a printing culture? This question is important for a better understanding of Mark.

Mark’s oral legacy was also dealt with. Rhoads (2010:9) argues that “many scholars think that the Gospel of Mark was composed orally and then written down on some occasion in its performance life.” However, whether Mark was composed orally or not is not the concern of the current research. What is important in regard to its orality features is the mnemonic function thereof. Collins (2007:524) argues that “since Mark was written to be read aloud by a single reader to a gathered group, the purpose of aiding the listener is likely to be the intention of the author.” Kelber (1983:71) argues that “orality’s principal concern is not to preserve historical actuality, but to shape and break it into memorable, applicable speech.” Achtemeier (1990:21) argued that “the Markan technique of intercalating stories is a way of allowing one story to function as an *inclusio* for a second, thus aiding the listener in determining when both stories have concluded.”

Dewey (1994:149) offers some characteristics of oral narrative that can also aid the

interpretation of Mark. These are that oral narratives are additive and aggregative in composition, agonistic in tone, and participatory in character. In light of the additive and aggregative characteristics, Dewey (1989:37) argues “with our sensibilities formed in a print culture, we read analytic relationships into the additive oral narrative.” In light of this characteristic, it appears that those who believe in the prophecy of the destruction of the temple tend to interpret the passage as having a linear plot, while the additive and aggregative features only intends to give the parts thereof a simple consecutive (rather than mutually interpreting) meaning.

In terms of the agonistic tone of oral narratives, Dewey (1994:151) argues that “the negative portrayal of the disciples may well have seemed to audiences merely part of a normal story.” It was therefore argued that we can interpret the two stories in Mark 11:12-25 as expressing the normal agonistic tone of oral narratives. For modern senses Jesus’ cursing of a fig tree and his action in the temple seem overly aggressive, while they would have seemed normal in an oral culture.

As Dewey (1994:151) highlights, the participatory character of oral narratives can also aid the interpretation of Mark 11:12-25. For instance, Mark's reference to Jesus' teaching on faith, prayer, and forgiveness, focuses on his community's *participation* in these practices. It does not aim to give *information* on the destruction of the temple.

5.3 Conclusion

Although a number of scholars claim that Mark 11:12-25 contains an intercalation, it has been argued that there is no consensus on the definition and function of intercalations (chapter 2). It was also argued that in light of the insights of narrative criticism (chapter 3) and of the oral characters of Mark (chapter 4) that Mark 11:12-25 cannot be interpreted as having a symbolical meaning (the prophecy of the destruction of the temple). Therefore, it is argued that the intercalation in Mark 11 does not have the specific theological purpose to prophesize about the destruction of the temple, but that it is more reasonable to contend

that we should understand the structure of Mark 11:12-25 as an aid for the listener.

In her article *The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story*, Dewey (2004:495) asked: “Why did the Gospel of Mark survive? Why did it not go the way of Q?” Dewey (2004:495-496) suggests that “the Gospel of Mark survived because it was a good story, easily learned from hearing it and easily performed, thus easily transmitted orally.”⁴⁸ This study on Mark 11:12-25 suggests that Dewey was correct in her thesis – Mark knew how to aid the listener in understanding his narrative and in remembering its meaning.

⁴⁸ Hooker (2011:166) states “one significant obstacle to thinking of the Gospel as “story” was the fact that it was normally heard as part of the liturgy, and so in snippets, rather than as a whole: the hearers’ attention was thus concentrated on the individual pericopes. But while Mark’s Gospel was certainly intended to be heard rather than read privately, the drama of the story is inevitably lost when it is divided up into short sections.

Bibliography

- Abrams, M H 1999. *A glossary of literary terms*, 7th. Ed. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Achtemeier, P J 1990. *Omne Verbum Sonat: The New Testament and the oral environment of late Western antiquity*. *JBL* 109(1), pp. 3-27.
- Achtemeier, P J, Green, J B & M M Thompson 2001. *Introducing the New Testament: its literature and theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Anderson, H 1976. *The Gospel of Mark. New century Bible*. London: Oliphants.
- Barr, D L 2002. *New Testament story: an introduction*, 3rd. ed. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Beavis, M A 1989. *Mark's audience: the literary and social setting of Mark 4.11-12*. *Journal for the study of the New Testament Supplement series*. 33. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press.
- Boomershine, T E 2010. All Scholarship is Personal: David Rhoads and Performance Criticism *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37(4), pp. 279-287.
- 2011. Audience Address and Purpose in the Performance of Mark, in Iverson, K R & C W Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, 115-142. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Brown, R E 1997. *An introduction to the New Testament. Anchor Bible reference library*. New York: Doubleday.
- Brown, S G 2002. Mark 11:1-12:12: A Triple Intercalation. *CBQ* 64(1), pp. 78-89.
- Bryan, C 1993. *A preface to Mark: notes on the Gospel in its literary and cultural settings*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bultmann, R K 1968. *The history of the synoptic tradition*, Rev. ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chapman, D W 1993. *The orphan gospel: Mark's perspective on Jesus. Biblical seminar*. 16. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Chatman, S B 1978. *Story and discourse: narrative structure in fiction and film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Collins, A Y 1992. *The beginning of the Gospel: probings of Mark in context*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

--- 2007. *Mark : A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Davis, C W 1999. *Oral Biblical Criticism: The Influence of the Principles of Orality on the Literary Structure of Paul's Epistle to the Philip*, 172: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Dewey, J 1980. *Markan public debate: literary technique, concentric structure, and theology in Mark 2:1 - 3:6*. Chico: Scholars Press.

--- 1989. Oral Methods of structuring narrative in Mark. *Interpretation*: pp. 32-44.

--- 1991. Mark as interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience. *CBQ* 53. pp. 221-231.

--- 1994. The Gospel of Mark as an Oral-Aural Event: implications for interpretation, in McKnight, E V & E S Malbon (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, pp. 145-161. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

--- 2004. The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story? *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123(3), pp. 495-507.

--- 2011. The Historical Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, in Holmén, T & S E Porter (eds.): 3. *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. Leiden: Brill. pp. 1821-1851.

Donahue, J R 1973. *Are you the Christ? The trial Narratives in the Gospel of Mark*. SBLDS 10. Missoula: Scholars Press.

Donahue, J R & D J Harrington 2002. *The Gospel of Mark. Sacra pagina series*. 2. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.

Dowd, S E 1988. Prayer, power, and the problem of suffering: Mark 11:22-25 in the context of Markan theology. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Downing, F G 2000. Markan intercalation in cultural context. *Narrativeity in biblical and related texts*. Leuven: Leuven University Press. pp. 105-118.

Draper, J A 2006. Many Voices, One Script: The Prophecies of George Khambule, in horseley, R A, Draper, J A & J M Foley (eds.), *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. pp. 44-63.

Duling, D C 2011. Memory, collective memory, orality and the gospels. *HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies* 67(1), pp. 1-11, accessed on 1 Oct 2013 from Scieho Full text database, ISSN: 0259-9422.

Edwards, J R 1989. Markan Sandwiches. The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives. *Novum Testamentum* 31(3), pp. 193-216.

--- 2002. *The Gospel according to Mark. Pillar New Testament commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Erdman, C R 1917. *The Gospel of Mark: an exposition*. Philadelphia: Westminster.

Evans, C A 2001. *Mark 8:27-16:20. Word biblical commentary*. Vol 34B. Nashville: Nelson.

Fowler, R M 1991. *Let the reader understand: reader-response criticism and the Gospel of Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

France, R T 2002. *The Gospel of Mark: a commentary on the Greek text. New international Greek Testament commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Frei, H W 1974. *The eclipse of biblical narrative: a study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Guelich, R A 1989. *Mark 1-8:26. Word biblical commentary*. Vol 34A. Dallas: Word Books.

Gundry, R H 1993. *Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Hearon, H E 2006. The Implications of Orality for Studies of the Biblical Text, in Horseley, R A, Draper, J A & J M Foley (eds.), *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. pp. 3-20

--- 2011. From Narrative To Performance: Methodological Considerations And Interpretive Moves, in Iverson, K R & C W Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. pp. 211-232

Hendriksen, W 1975. *Exposition of the Gospel according to Mark. New Testament commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Hiers, R H 1968. Not the Season for Figs *JBL* 87(4), pp. 394-400.

Hooker, M D 1983. *The message of Mark*. London: Epworth.

--- 1991. *A commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark. Black's New Testament commentaries*. London: A & C Black.

--- 2011. Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in Iverson, K R & C W Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. pp. 165-180.

Horsley, R A 2001. *Hearing the whole story: the politics of plot in Mark's gospel*, 1st ed. Louisville: John Knox Press.

- Horsley, R A 2011. Jesus-in-Context: A Reational Approach, in Holmén, T & Porter, S E (eds.): *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. Leiden: Brill. pp. 208-239
- Horsley, R A, Draper, J A & Foley, J M 2006. *Performing the Gospel orality, Memory, and Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Iverson, K R 2009. Orality and the Gospels: A Survey of Recent Research. *Currents in Biblical Research* 8(1), pp. 71-106.
- Jaffe, M S 2001. *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, L T 1986. *The writings of the New Testament: an interpretation*. London: SCM Press.
- Juel, D H 1990 *Mark: Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Kee, H C 1977. *Community of the new age: studies in Mark's Gospel*. *New Testament library*. London: SCM Press.
- Kelber, W H 1983. *The Oral and the Written Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Kirk, A 2011. Memory Theory and Jesus Research, in Holmén, T & Porter, S E (eds.). *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. Leiden: Brill. pp. 809-842.
- Kirk, J R D 2012. Time for Figs, Temple Destruction, and Houses of Prayer in Mark 11:12-25. *CBQ*. pp. 509-527.
- Lane, W L 1974. *The Gospel according to Mark: the English text with introduction, exposition and notes*. *New international commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Mann, C S 1986. *Mark: Anchor Bible*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Marcus, J 2009. *Mark 8-16: A new Translation with Intruduction and Commentary*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Marsh, C & Moyise, S 1999. *Jesus and the Gospels: an introduction*. *Cassell biblical studies series*. London: Cassell.
- Marshall, C D 1989. *Faith as a theme in Mark's narrative*. *Monograph series / Society for New Testament Studies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, R P 1979. *Mark: evangelist and theologian*, 2nd. ed. Exeter: Paternoster.

McKnight, E V 1969. *What is form criticism? New Testament series Guides to Biblical scholarship*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Minor, M 1996. *The spirituality of Mark: responding to God*, 1st ed. Louisville: John Knox Press.

Moloney, F J 2004. *Mark: storyteller, interpreter, evangelist*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers.

Nineham, D E 1968. *The Gospel of St. Mark*, Rev. ed. *Pelican gospel commentaries*. London: Penguin Books.

Ong, W J 2002. *Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word. New accents*. London: Routledge.

Oyen, G V 1992. Intercalation and irony in the Gospel of Mark. *Four Gospels*. pp. 949-974.

Perrin, N 1969. *What is redaction criticism? New Testament series Guides to Biblical scholarship*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Powell, M A 1990. *What is narrative criticism? Guides to biblical scholarship New Testament series*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

--- 2011. Narrative Criticism: The Emergence of a Prominent Reading Strategy, in Iverson, K R & C W Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. pp. 19-43.

Rhoads, D 2010. Performance criticism: An emerging methodology in biblical studies. *Society of Biblical Literature*.

Rhoads, D M & Michie, D 1982. *Mark as story: an introduction to the narrative of a Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Robbins, V K 1972. Book Review: Mark - traditions in conflict, by Theodore J. Weeden Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971. *JBL* 91(35), pp. 417-420.

--- 2006. Interfaces of Orality and Literature in the Gospel of Mark, in Horsley, R A, Draper, J A & J M Foley (eds.), *Performing the Gospel orality, Memory, and Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. pp. 125-146.

Rodríguez, R 2009. Reading and Hearing in Ancient Contexts. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32(2), pp. 151-178.

Rohrbaugh, R L 1993. The Social Location of the Markan Audience. *Interpretation* 47(4), pp. 380-395.

--- 1996. *The Social sciences and New Testament interpretation*. Peabody: Hendrickson.

Sanders, E P 1985. *Jesus and Judaism*. London: SCM Press.

Schildgen, B D 1998. *Crisis and continuity: time in the Gospel of Mark*. *Journal for the study of the New Testament Supplement series*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Shepherd, T 1991. The definition and function of Markan intercalation as illustrated in a narrative analysis of six passages, Andrews University, Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary.

--- 1991. Intercalation in Mark and the Synoptic Problem. *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*. pp. 687-697.

Shim, E S-B 1994. The transfiguration of Jesus according to Mark: a narrative reading. D Th thesis, University of Stellenbosch.

Shiner, W T 2003. *Proclaiming the Gospel: first-century performance of Mark*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International.

--- 2006. Memory Technology and the Composition of Mark, in Horsley, R A, Draper, J A & J M Foley (eds.), *Performing the Gospel orality, Memory, and Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. pp. 147-165.

T.W.Manson 1951. The Cleansing of the Temple. *BJRL* 33.

Taylor, V 1966. *The Gospel according to St. Mark: the Greek text with introduction, notes, and indexes*, 2nd. ed. London: Macmillan.

Telford, W R 1980. *The barren temple and the withered tree: a redaction-critical analysis of the cursing of the fig-tree pericope in Mark's Gospel and its relation to the cleansing of the temple tradition*. *Journal for the study of the New Testament Supplement series*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

Watson, D F 2010. *Honor among Christians: the cultural key to the Messianic secret*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Weeden, T J 1979. *Mark, traditions in conflict*, 1st. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Wright, G A, Jr 1985. *Markan Intercalations: A Study in the Plot of the Gospel*, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Wuest, K S 1950. *Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Yang, Y-E 2004. Reading Mark 11:12-25 from a Korean Perspective, in Porter, S E (ed.), *Reading the Gospels today*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. pp. 78-99.